

THE SCRIPTURAL TITHE

BY

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PREFACE

Tithing is a controversial subject and therefore needs to be carefully studied that the Christian may know the scriptural teaching and guide his life accordingly. Ignorance at this point ought to be condoned no more than at any other point of Bible doctrine. A careful study of the Scripture on this subject should bring conviction concerning the true biblical teaching just as much as the study of any other doctrine, for certainly all the truth of Scripture is ascertainable by the diligent student.

For years the writer practiced tithing chiefly because his pastor taught it and the teaching seemed to be scriptural. Then while an undergraduate student in a theological seminary he was taught that tithing today was a return to legalism and ought not to be practiced. There were problems with this view, but still it sounded quite scriptural when the dispensational argument was urged in support of it. Although the writer did not forsake the practice of tithing he was never fully satisfied that the basis for the practice was completely justified by the Scripture passages which were cited in its favor. Hence, eventually it was decided to make a careful study of the subject in both the Old and New Testaments in order to arrive at a definite conviction which would be based on substantial scriptural evidence. This dissertation

is the fruit of that labor, and the conviction now is that there is adequate New Testament evidence that God's plan for giving still is the tithe as a minimum amount.

In the analysis of this subject the complete authority of the Bible is adhered to, for the writer accepts what is called the verbal, plenary view of inspiration with reference to the original manuscripts. Therefore, the literal sense of Scripture is followed unless there is some good reason to treat it otherwise. Hence the author bases his reasoning and conclusions upon a constant appeal to chapter and verse citations.

In developing this subject the writer recognizes that there is no problem concerning the tithe in connection with the Mosaic Law. That is, every Bible student knows that the Law included the tithe as an integral part of its system. Hence that phase of the subject does not receive a lengthy presentation. Also, Bible students readily recognize that tithing was practiced to some degree at least prior to the Law, but the full import of this fact is not always discerned. Hence that phase of the subject receives a more extended analysis than is deemed necessary for the Law. But the real problem is associated with our dispensation which is immediately subsequent to the Law. It is in this area of our study that we must decide whether or not the New Testament presents the principle of the tithe as a part of our Lord's instructions, and hence His will for us today. As far as Christians are concerned this is the most important part of our subject. Therefore, an extended discussion is presented together with

the correlation of the New Testament and its implications in view of the Old Testament teachings.

No claim is made by the author to have exhausted the subject, for the Bible is recognized as an inexhaustible book. However, all of the passages which refer directly to the tithe have been dealt with carefully and much literature has been examined in an effort to secure as closely as possible the true analysis of the subject. Practically all of the facts presented are discernible in the King James Version, but where that version was insufficiently clear the Hebrew and Greek texts have clarified matters. In the light of these considerations the writer has rejoiced continually in the unfolding of this subject and the clarity with which the Holy Spirit has presented God's plan of giving, the tithe.

The author has greatly appreciated the privilege of doing this work in the Grace Theological Seminary and he hereby acknowledges the personal help and courtesy which the librarian, Mr. Benjamin A. Hamilton, extended to him. Also the advice, counsel, and encouragement of Dr. Homer A. Kent, Jr., Dr. John Rea, and Dr. John C. Whitcomb have been of great assistance in the preparation of this dissertation. Therefore, the writer takes this opportunity to express his sincere thanks and acknowledgment to these brethren who have helped to make this study possible.

All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated; the Hebrew text used is that edited by Rudolph Kittel, copyright 1939; and the Greek text is that of Eberhard Nestle, published in 1910.

If the readers of this dissertation are blessed by it and are more firmly established in the faith, then the writer will feel that his labours have not been in vain. Such results will be ample remuneration for the effort expended. Also, whatever error is found herein is the responsibility of this writer, but whatever truth is presented is to be ascribed to the Lord that all glory may be His.

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INTRODUCTION

The Problem of Giving

The subject of giving, and especially that of tithing, lacks a unanimity of understanding among the Lord's people. Consequently the Lord's work suffers on account of insufficient funds and the Lord's people miss the blessings which come to those who, knowing the Lord's will, perform it to His glory. It seems to be comparatively easy for people to say they surrender all to the Lord and yet to be very niggardly in the practical aspect of giving. Certainly it seems that the acid test of Christianity is how and how much a Christian gives financially, for the ties to earthly things are very real with most people.

Giving is a doctrine of Scripture and one about which probably all Christians are agreed to the extent that every Christian should contribute financially to the support of Christian work. But the point of doctrinal disagreement is whether the Scriptures teach that there is a definite proportion which should be given, or whether the believer is left to his own judgment in the matter. In other words the area of difference within the doctrine is basically whether a Christian is expected to practice tithing as the minimum of his financial obligation to the Lord's work. Stemming from the doctrinal issue there is also the practical value

which makes the study of Christian giving both important and profitable for edification and practice. In commenting upon this subject Stedman says that

In almost any conceivable type of Christian activity, the matter of money is almost certain ultimately to be considered. At no other point than in the realm of giving do the ideals of Christian living so closely touch the mundane world in which we live. Whatever, therefore, the study of this doctrine may lack in theological content is more abundantly made up in the practical benefits received.¹

“When the day of Pentecost was fully come” (Acts 2: 1) is the scriptural declaration which marks the introduction of a new age in human affairs in which a revolutionary change in the relations between God and man was effected. No longer was the Law the rule of life, for it was now superseded by a new rule of life under Grace. The external approach to God through the natural means of sacrifices and offerings was no longer effective, for now God desired man to worship Him “in spirit and in truth” (Jo. 4:23). A cataclysmic change was accomplished by the death and resurrection of Christ which affected every area of the believer’s relation to God. Therefore, it is our purpose to investigate the subject of the scriptural tithe to learn what effect, if any, this change had upon the principle of tithing.

In all too many instances Christians fail to grasp what it means to live under Grace and they are inclined to limit their relation to God to the so-called spiritual things

¹ Ray Charles Stedman, “Giving Under Grace,” Bibliotheca Sacra, CVII, No. 427 (July - September, 1950), 317.

and to exclude from that relationship everything that pertains to the material side of life. This is a false concept which affects many believers more than they realize and it is a dangerous attitude because it is latent asceticism. The only antidote for it is a complete understanding of the doctrine of giving especially in the area of the scriptural tithe.

The Scriptural Emphasis Upon Giving

The writers of Scripture certainly knew the value to be derived from giving as evidenced by the abundance of references to that subject. They were under no delusion that money matters were on a far lower spiritual plane than other doctrinal subjects. It was continually recognized as a form of true worship which was not to be disparaged under the guise of a superficial piety of emphasizing the spiritual to the neglect of the material.

When it is carefully noted how the Bible abounds with commands, practical suggestions, warnings, and examples of giving, then something of the importance of this subject will be realized. Throughout the Scriptures miserliness, greed, and avarice are strongly denounced while generosity, hospitality, and charity are held forth as goals of the highest value to be attained. Repeatedly Scripture warns against covetousness, and in writing to the Colossian Christians Paul denounces covetousness as idolatry: "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; . . .and covetousness which is idolatry" (Col. 3:5).

Since there is such a scriptural emphasis upon giving it is quite natural to inquire whether it has pleased the Lord to lay down in His Word any specific rule upon the subject. Or has He left it to every believer to decide for himself according to his circumstances and that which is agreeable to his own sense of duty? Most assuredly a large segment of believers (very probably the vast majority) have acted and continue to act as if God has given no specific rule on the subject. So far as that which appears to the eye of an observer is concerned there does not seem to be any real concern among believers that there should be a law of God in this matter which is not being obeyed. Instead, a spirit of doubtfulness and hesitation has prevailed extensively. However, there have been and there are today those who are the exceptions and who teach and practice that there is a scriptural rule for giving.

Is There a Scriptural Plan For Giving?

Much has been written in an attempt to answer this question with the result that two basic views are expressed in that literature: (1) that the tithe is taught throughout the Bible as the basis for giving, and (2) that the tithe is not binding in this day of Grace, but since everything belongs to the Lord anyway, the believer decides how much he can afford to give. Of course there are various modifications of these views, but the problem really amounts to whether or not the tithe is still God's plan of giving for today.

Many of the writers obviously write to espouse a particular viewpoint with an appeal to certain Scripture passages which are supposed to teach their view. As far as this writer has observed in the material which he has examined there is very little genuine Bible exposition and analysis of the subject. Those who advocate tithing for this day of Grace are quite generally accused of teaching legalism by those who reject the tithe principle. On the other hand those who reject tithing are charged with not having carefully analyzed the various passages which are involved. As a result of this controversy much confusion has arisen which makes it imperative that Christians should call a halt to the partisanship of the issue and reappraise the subject conscientiously [sic] in the light of the Scripture. In view of the divergent teaching it is manifest that someone has misunderstood the scriptural teaching. Thus it would be well if the subject could be calmly restudied with a conscious effort to avoid as far as possible bias and prejudice. In recognizing this confusion J. E. Simpson says that,

Perhaps no teaching of the Scriptures is more misunderstood than that of the Tithe. No doubt much of it is due to the absence of a clear-cut statement of its place in the teachings of the Old and New Testaments. In every age of history thousands have religiously paid it. Yet one is unable to find anywhere in print to-day a popular interpretation of it.¹

Since tithing seems to be the main point of difference,

¹ John E. Simpson, This World's Goods (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1939, p. 88.

then a reappraisal of that teaching in the Bible should do much to resolve the problem. Therefore, the present writer, in order to settle his own thinking upon this subject, has attempted an analysis of the scriptural tithe which is presented in this dissertation. No claim is made to having exhausted the subject, but a determined effort has been made to analyze it so that the teaching of the Scripture seems to be apparent. How successful this writer has been in this analysis is left for the reader to judge in the light of the authority of the Bible. But it does appear that God has a plan for scriptural giving for our day.

Method of Procedure

This dissertation is not a history of tithing as practiced in the world, but it is an attempt to discover what the Scripture teaches concerning the tithe. Therefore, the heathen practice of tithing is only incidental to our subject and it will not receive an extended treatment. However when it is necessary to a better understanding of the Scripture under consideration the heathen practice of tithing will be properly noted. Hence the purpose of this dissertation is to give a careful analysis of the scriptural teaching of the tithe that believers shall know the totality of that instruction as it is based upon chapter and verse citations.

Our study is a chronological consideration of the pertinent passages so that the progressive teaching and practice

of the Bible will be clearly manifest. It is recognized that progressive revelation is the means which God chose by which to transmit to man the many truths which He desired man to have. Therefore, it is necessary to note the step by step process in the divine unfolding of the subject of the tithe.

This means that dispensational distinctions will be observed, for it is not sufficient merely to list Scripture references as a compilation and then attempt to deduce a proper biblical pattern. The problem is more complex than that, for it must be borne in mind that the Bible records more than one rule of life since there is more than one group of saints with whom God has to deal. Clear distinctions are made in the Bible between the Jew, the Gentile, and the Church of God, for each group is different from the others in its required observances, promises, warnings, destiny, etc. These differences cannot be ignored, for to do so will result only in hopeless confusion.

It should be noted further that this dissertation will not consider the wider field of stewardship in either the Old or New Testaments. Our study comprises only one phase of the subject of stewardship — we leave the other areas for other writers to analyze.¹

Because so many writers who attempt to deal with the subject of the tithe have not analyzed the various related

¹ The wider field of stewardship we consider as embracing all that a Christian has in talent, time, and possessions. He is to use all of these to the glory of God.

passages in the light of the original languages, this present writer has attempted to interpret the references by noting the contribution which the languages have made. Thus the significance of the Old Testament words is seen to throw considerable light upon our understanding of the early practice of giving. The significance of Genesis 26:5 is largely missed by practically all writers although occasionally one will suggest that the verse is more important than appears on the surface. In the New Testament the Greek construction is very significant and when the context of the pertinent passages is considered in conjunction with the Greek the apparent teaching becomes quite plain.

When all of the facts have been ascertained and properly correlated it will be seen that apparently God does have an unmistakable plan for giving today, which fits in perfectly with the whole scheme of Bible doctrine. In the over-all approach to this subject there are three natural divisions: (1) tithing before the Mosaic Law; (2) tithing under the Law as a rule of life; and (3) tithing in connection with Grace as a rule of life as presented in the New Testament. In the development of these natural divisions of the subject it will be necessary to consider: (1) the contribution which the story of Cain and Abel makes to an understanding of the sacrifices of antiquity; (2) the meaning of Noah's burnt-offerings must be found; (3) Abraham's act of tithing to Melchizedek must be properly evaluated; (4) in evaluating Abraham's tithe we must learn why he tithed if at all possible; (5) the significance of Jacob's tithe

need be considered; (6) tithing under the Mosaic Law must be properly noted as a part of a definite legal system which imposed sanctions upon its violators (This will be seen to be in marked contrast to the condition which preceded the Law and that which is subsequent to it.); (7) the New Testament must be searched to discover if there are passages which reveal any pertinent teaching on the subject of the tithe for today; (8) if it is reasonably apparent that the New Testament teaches tithing for this day of Grace, then it will be needful to learn how such teaching is reconciled with the Old Testament and especially the Law; and (9) after all of the preceding facts have been properly correlated then it will be necessary to see how the New Testament teaching is to be put into practice by the Christian. It will be important, also, to consider the place of the local church in the New Testament scheme of things, as well as to understand the place and relative importance of other Christian projects to the ministry of the Gospel. When we have duly explored all of these various phases of the subject then we shall be in a position to formulate intelligently what the scriptural view of the tithe really is. By this means we shall understand clearly what our own attitude and practice should be, for principle must always precede practice. We shall now consider the contribution which a study of Cain and Abel makes to the subject of the scriptural tithe.

PART I

TITHING BEFORE THE MOSAIC LAW

CHAPTER I

PRE-ABRAHAMIC RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

CHAPTER I

PRE-ABRAHAMIC RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

Introduction

The brief account of the sacrifices which were offered by Cain and Abel furnishes us with the first scriptural record of the religious practices of the human race. It may be conjectured, and probably correctly so, that they had received certain instruction in these matters from their father, Adam, and it undoubtedly would be true, also, that they had been further instructed by his example in this practice of sacrifice. But it is apparent at the outset that the teaching and practice of Adam were not faithfully followed by the older son, Cain.

The second record in Scripture of a sacrifice is in connection with Noah's act of worship following his family's deliverance from the flood when Jehovah finally released them from the Ark.

These two accounts furnish the background for the scriptural record of the early religious practices of men up to the time of Abraham, and a consideration of each is necessary in order that we might discover any contributing factors to our understanding of Abraham's act of tithing. Therefore, we shall move on to our study of these acts of worship largely through a consideration of important words and their meaning

and implications. We turn first to the story of Cain and Abel.

The Religious Practices of Cain and Abel

Although the biblical account of this incident (Gen. 4:3-7) in the lives of these two eldest sons of Adam and Eve is rather brief, still a careful study of it is rewarding. The facts presented and the implications which develop therefrom contribute to the unfolding of our subject. True, tithing as such is not mentioned in this context, but the fact that men have presented their offerings, or gifts, to God is seen from these earliest records of man's activities upon this earth.

Each Presented an Offering unto the Lord

The description of these offerings is found in verses 3 and 4 and it is necessary that we consider carefully the record at this point:

And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and his offering.

The prevalence of sacrifice among men seems to require that its origin shall be Divine rather than of human invention, for had it been of purely human origin, it is almost certain that greater diversity of form would have prevailed. Furthermore,

The fact that the mode of worship was not left to human ingenuity under the law, and that will-worship is specifically condemned under the Christian dispensation (Col.

ii. 23), favors the presumption that it was Divinely appointed from the first.¹

In the case of Cain and Abel there is intimation of the Divine origin of their act in virtue of the fact that they presented their offerings “unto the Lord” (v. 3) rather than to some heathen deity. According to the record it would seem that at this time false deities had not yet arisen among men. Therefore since man still was worshipping Jehovah, the logical explanation for the action of these brothers would be some revelation from Him whom they worshipped. Otherwise they would have been ignorant concerning the proper procedure. Also it is very probable that they went “to the gate of the garden, where the cherubim and flaming sword were established as the visible monuments of the Divine presence.”² The worship of idols as a substitute for the one true God had not yet taken place — man still thought in terms of Jehovah.

“In the process of time” (v. 3) designates the time in their lives when they performed this act. Literally this means, “at the end of days, i.e. after a considerable lapse of time.”³ The length of time involved is not clear, for various writers call attention to the term referring to a

¹ Thomas Whitelaw, Genesis, in The Pulpit Commentary, edited by H. D. M. Spence and Joseph S. Exell (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, New Edition, 1913), p. 78.

² Ibid.

³ C. F. Keil, The Pentateuch, Vol. I., in Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament, by C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, trans. James Martin (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951), p. 109.

year, a week, or some set time.¹ Thus the context must be depended upon to establish the time element in each use of this word. In this particular context the sense would seem to require that the author had in mind a considerable lapse of time, for a harvest appears to be in view in connection with Cain and the natural increase of Abel's flock is also recognized. Both a harvest and the natural increase in a flock would require an extended length of time to produce the results. A confirmatory use of this word, יָמִים, is found in Gen. 40:4, when Joseph is placed in charge of Pharaoh's imprisoned chief of the butlers and chief of the bakers for "a season" – according to the context it was an indefinite period of time. Thus it is quite apparent that Cain and Abel presented their offerings before the Lord at the season of ingathering and that this was hardly a regular weekly offering. Here, then, is a strong indication that these offerings were connected with the harvest in recognition of the increase and that a portion of it was being presented to the Lord. No specified amount, such as the tithe, is designated, but nonetheless the context is not violated if one would think of these offerings in some such terminology. But we must await further study to determine if this intimation is further supported.

The Nature of the Offerings

In our immediately preceding discussion it was seen

¹ Whitelaw, op. cit., p. 78.

that the time of these offerings was strongly suggestive of the nature of the offerings as well, but we must now consider their nature more specifically and in greater detail.

Commentators are not in complete accord concerning the type of offerings which these two men presented to the Lord.

Two views are found, with able expositors espousing each:

(1) that these were intended to be sin-offerings; and (2) that the offerings were “gifts” to the Lord. Now let us examine the offerings to determine what is reasonably intended. The word “offering” deserves our careful scrutiny.

The word for “offering” used here. — Several words are used in the Hebrew text of the Old Testament for offerings of one kind or another. For a proper evaluation of the offerings of Cain and Abel it is necessary that this word shall be compared with the usage of the other words for offering. Moses used the word, מִנְחָה, to express the act of Cain and Abel. This is the noun form of the root מנח which means “to give.” Thus the word in which we are interested means, “a gift, tribute, offering,” and it is recognized as a general term for offering with no specific designation of a blood sacrifice — it is simply the idea of gift, tribute or offering which may express reverence, thanks, homage, friendship or allegiance.¹ In its use this word designates a gift, and when spoken of as an offering made to God, it

¹ Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner (eds.), Lexicon In Veteris Testamenti Libros (Leiden, Neth.: E. J. Brill, 1953), II, 538.

may be “of any kind, whether grain or animals.”¹ Some of the various uses of this word are worth our consideration in evaluating the meaning of the term in connection with Cain and Abel.

The general nature of this word for “offering” is seen in a number of cases.

(1) It is used in the sense of a “gift” or “present,” as when Jacob met Esau on his return home from Haran and gave to his estranged brother the gift of droves of animals as a means of appeasing him (Gen. 32:13, 14, 19, 21, 22).

(2) This word may denote a tribute to be paid to a king or sovereign by a captive people. Under the leadership of Ehud, a “present” in the sense of a “tribute,” was raised among the children of Israel for Eglon the King of Moab (Judges 3:15, 17-19);

(3) In the realm of worship, this word is used of any kind of offerings made to God, whether of incense, grain, or animals. (a) In Moses’ contest with Korah, he asked the Lord not to accept Korah’s “offering” of incense (Num. 16:15). (b) When Eli was priest in the childhood days of Samuel, it was declared that “men abhorred the offering of God” (1 Sam. 2:17). The offering referred to was that of the animals which the people brought to the tabernacle as their acts of worship before the Lord (vs. 12-16). (c) From

¹ Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), p. 585. Also see Koehler and Baumgartner, Ibid.

Ex. 29:41 through Num. 4:16 the word for “offering” is used to designate the “meal offering,” and in Num. 5:15, 18, 25 it also is associated with the “jealousy offering.” It is further used of the “evening sacrifices” in Ezra 9:4, 5 and Psa. 141:2, and of the “evening oblation” in Dan. 9:21. In the light of these facts, the statement by Keil and Delitzsch is very apropos:

That the usage of the Mosaic law cannot determine the meaning of this passage, is evident from the word minchah, which is applied in Leviticus to bloodless sacrifices only whereas it is used here in connection with Abel’s sacrifice.¹

These examples from Scripture should suffice for our purpose to establish the fact that this word for “offering” is a general term and not specific for blood sacrifices. Therefore, to interpret the offering of Abel as in the realm of blood sacrifices, with no possibility of any other meaning, is hardly justified. Such an interpretation can be insisted upon only if the contextual situation demands it; otherwise, the general meaning of the term must be accepted. As previously noted the time phrase, “in the process of time” (v. 3), apparently refers to an extended period of time after which these two men came before the Lord with their “offerings” or “gifts.” That such phraseology strongly supports the idea of a gift rather than a stated blood sacrifice certainly is reasonable. Hermeneutically speaking we can

¹ C. F. Keil, The Pentateuch, Vol. I in Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament, by C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, trans. James Martin (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951), p. 109.

state it this way, in our interpretation of a passage: “we must discover the meaning of a passage, not attribute one to it a priori,”¹ and furthermore we must “give preference to the clearest and most evident interpretation of a passage.”² In noting that the time element apparently refers to an extended period of time which strongly suggests the offerings to be “gifts,” we believe that these two hermeneutical principles have been more faithfully observed. Furthermore this interpretation would be in greater agreement with the word, for it would not place us in the position of declaring the offerings to be sacrifices when the word itself does not require such an interpretation.

Now we may take another step in our progressive analysis of this earliest recorded scriptural offering. There is another word for “offering” to which we must give attention before we can more perfectly understand the passage under consideration.

The word for “slaughter for sacrifice”. — Since we have noted that the word for “offering,” as used in connection with Cain and Abel is a general term expressing the idea of “gift, tribute, or offering,” we cannot leave this Passage without considering another Hebrew Word which is definitely expressive of the idea of blood sacrifice. This

¹ Bernard Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation (Boston: W. A. Wilde Company, 1950), p. 84.

²Ibid., p. 85.

noun is זָבַח, whose root is זָבַח, and which means

“slaughter for sacrifice.” The use of the noun form is seen as a sacrifice in Gen. 31:54, when Jacob and Laban covenanted together as Jacob was fleeing from Haran to Bethel. Brown, Driver, and Briggs describe this noun as

The most common and most ancient sacrifice, whose essential rite was eating the flesh of the victims at a feast in which the god of the clan shared by receiving the blood and fat pieces. In the older literature, it is distinguished מִנְחָה and עֹלָה.

...¹

Furthermore it should be pointed out that this word is used for all sacrifices eaten at feasts in association with the God of Israel (Gen. 46:1) and also it is used of feasts to heathen deities (Ex. 34:15).

Koehler and Baumgartner explain this word as a “sacrifice of slaughtered sheep, goat, cattle, the eating of whose flesh creates communion between the god in whose worship the sacrifice is slaughtered” and the one who offers it.² Several kinds of sacrifices are distinguished in the Old Testament:³

- (1) The covenant sacrifice between Jacob and Laban (Gen. 31:54);
- (2) The Passover (Ex. 34:25);
- (3) The annual sacrifice (I Sam. 1:21);
- (4) The thank offering (Lev. 7:12).

The distinction between these words is further supported

¹ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *op. cit.*, p. 257.

² Koehler and Baumgartner, *op. cit.*, I, 249.

³ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *op. cit.*, p. 257.

ported by Snaith when he shows that עֹלָה refers to the whole-offering, or that which is wholly burnt. He also states that זֶבַח means a slain offering in which the meat was shared in a meal, while מִנְחָה expresses a gift of grain, hence it means a gift, or tribute in the general or wider sense.¹

In view of the above considerations, we note further the light thrown upon this word by Brown, Driver, and Briggs when they state that this word

seems not only to be used for all these special forms, but also to include other festal sacrifices not defined in the codes of law. The ritual was the same for the entire class. They were all sacrifices for feasts in which the flesh of the victim was eaten by the offerers, except so far as the officiating priests had certain choice pieces and the blood and fat pieces went to the altar for God. The sacrifice at the institution of the covenant at Horeb, the Passover victim, and the ram of consecration, were special, in that there was an application of a portion of the blood to the persons and things which were to be consecrated.²

Something of the significance of this word to our study is now apparent. If this word had been used to name the sacrifices of Cain and Abel instead of the one chosen for that purpose, there could be no doubt that a blood sacrifice was involved. But, as we have noted already, the word for “offering” is the general term for gift or tribute and it cannot pertain to a blood sacrifice unless the context clearly designates it as such. In this instance, the context is not that definite, so the weight of the evidence

¹ N. H. Snaith, “Sacrifice in the Old Testament,” Vetus Testamentum, VII, No. 3 (July, 1957), 308-317.

² Brown, Driver, and Briggs, op. cit., pp. 257-258.

seemingly would favor the general use of the term rather than the special – that the sacrifices necessarily need not be blood sacrifices.

Two kinds of offerings. – The usual pattern for religious offerings is two-fold: (1) those which are expressive of duty, gratitude, and devotion, and (2) those which are expiatory. This was true under both the Levitical order and heathen religions, therefore, we need to identify, if possible, which category describes the offerings of these men.

The offerings which Cain and Abel brought to the Lord were in complete accord with their respective occupations. Cain's is stated simply as "the fruit of the ground," while Abel's is said to have been "of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof." It is to be noted that Abel's is identified more fully than his brother's, for his was of the "firstlings of his flock" which could mean either the firstborn, which God later demanded of His people (Ex. 13: 12), or the choicest and best (Job 18:13). Furthermore, his offering is explained more completely as "of the fat thereof" which identifies it as "not merely the first good one that came to hand,"¹ but as the very best that he had.² Such a description readily fits a gift offering, but not an expiatory sacrifice.

Therefore, in view of this fact and of our previous

¹ Keil, op. cit., p. 109.

² Whitelaw, op. cit., p. 2.

study of the word מִנְחָה it seems unwarranted to identify these offerings as expiatory sacrifices. Thus we are left with the other alternative that these very probably were offerings in the nature of a gift expressive of gratitude to God for His bountiful provisions. Hence, it is recognized that this type of offering had in it the similar element to that of the tithe and not that which was expiatory. It was, rather, that which was a gift expressive of the offerer's gratitude to God for the increase which resulted from his physical labor. Now we move on to learn how all of this affected the Lord.

Jehovah's Reaction to the Offerings

It is stated in verses 4 and 5 that the Lord accepted Abel's offering, but that He rejected Cain's, in the words: "and the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect." It is obvious that the word "respect" is the key word in this statement, hence, it needs careful consideration.

The word "respect". — It is very evident by the use of this word that the statement is intended to convey the idea that the Lord accepted the one sacrifice, but at the same time rejected the other. How Jehovah signified His acceptance of the one and His rejection of the other does not appear, but "it is a common and ancient opinion that fire consumed Abel's sacrifice, and thus showed that it was graciously accepted."¹ This opinion has in its favor the

¹ Kei1, op. cit., p. 110.

analogy based upon the way the Lord acknowledged acceptable offerings upon different occasions in later days (i.e., Lev. 9:24; Judges 6:21), but “it does not suit the words, ‘unto Abel and his gift.’” Furthermore these words appear to mean more than that even if that kind of action is in view.

The word “respect” literally means, “looked upon,”¹ and in connection with Abel, it signifies the acceptance of both his person and then his gift, while Cain was not accepted in either his person or his gift, for we note that it is “Abel . . . and his offering,” and “Cain . . . and his offering” that are in view. Thus it is that both the persons and offerings are involved in the distinction which the Lord made between Cain and Abel.

The reason for Jehovah’s distinction between Cain and Abel. – The fact that the Lord accepted Abel and his offering and at the same time rejected Cain and his offering is of value to know, but why the Lord put such a distinction between them is a far more important point to understand and more easily ascertained than how He had demonstrated the distinction. Why He discriminated between them is unequivocally declared by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews when he wrote: “by faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain” (Heb. 11:4). So we are to understand that Abel’s offering was more excellent than Cain’s because

¹ Whitelaw, op. cit., p. 78.

he offered it by faith. Therefore, it is to be noted that, first, his person was accepted as righteous; then, second, his gift was declared to be well pleasing to the Lord.

All of this agrees with the scriptural account which we have under consideration, wherein it is not said that God had respect to Abel's offering and then to himself, but, first, He had respect to Abel and then to his offering. This is the way it must always be — the acceptance of the person must precede the acceptance of the gift; and the acceptance of the person is by faith. Abel's offering, in itself and without the basis of faith, had no more efficacy than the offering presented by Cain, to recommend him to the favor of God. Abel was not accepted on account of his gift and neither was Cain rejected on account of his, but Abel believed and that provided the basis for God to act with favor toward his offering. Thus his sacrifice became the expression of his faith. On the other hand, Cain also presented an offering, which in its own place, would have been acceptable to God, had it been offered in faith. He, too, would have been declared righteous, as was his brother (Heb. 11:4), had he come on the faith principle. Thus his sacrifice could have been the expression of his faith in exactly the same way that Abel's had.¹

Furthermore, we would note that if both of Adam's sons had had the foundation of faith in their lives, then they would have had the proper state of mind toward God and

¹ Robert S. Candlish, The Book of Genesis Expounded in a Series of Discourses (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1884), p. 75.

they would have made the selection of their gifts as a manifestation of that mind. Accordingly, each made his own choice of an offering in keeping with the produce of his own occupation. As far as the offering was concerned, Abel brought of the best that he had, the fattest firstlings of the flock, while Cain brought only a portion of the fruit of the ground, but not the first-fruits. Keil states the reason for the different reception of the two offerings as,

Not, indeed, in the fact that Abel brought a bleeding sacrifice and Cain a bloodless one; for this difference arose from the difference in their callings, and each necessarily took his gift from the produce of his own occupation. It was rather in the fact that Abel offered the fattest firstlings of his flock, the best that he could bring; whilst Cain only brought a portion of the fruit of the ground, but not the first-fruits.¹

To see that it was not the wish of Adam's sons to receive the forgiveness of sin, we note further that no mention is made of expiation, for the word מִנְחָה speaks of a gift, or tribute of appreciation. Keil and Delitzsch state that the idea that Abel offered a blood sacrifice because he deserved death on account of sin has been transferred to this passage from the expiatory sacrifices of the Mosaic law. Keil further points out that these

offerings were expressive of gratitude to God, to whom they owed all that they had; and were associated also with the desire to secure the divine favour and blessing, so that they are to be regarded not merely as thank-offerings, but as supplicatory sacrifices, and as propitiatory also, in the wider sense of the word. In this the two offerings are alike.²

¹ Keil, op. cit., p. 110.

² Ibid., pp. 110, 111.

Thus it is to be seen that Abel's offering expressed his thanks from the depth of his heart while Cain was desirous merely of keeping on good terms with God. This difference is manifest in the choice of the gifts which each brought from his respective occupation. Moreover the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews declares that Abel offered "a more excellent sacrifice" than did Cain (Heb, 11:4). The word for "more excellent" is *πλείονα* and it means "fuller." Thus Abel's sacrifice is said to be fuller than Cain's; that is, it had more in it; it had faith which was lacking in the other. Because of his faith, Abel gave his "gift" in obedience to the Divine prescription.

Faith implies previous instruction. — As has been pointed out before, the universal prevalence of sacrifice points to its origin as being Divine rather than of human invention. Thus in the operation of faith, there must be of necessity some instruction, or previous prescription which had been made known as the Word of God. Fallen man could not be expected to know how to please God except he first know what God's desire was as expressed in His instructions or commands. "Where no law is, there can be no transgression" (Rom. 4:15). Consequently, unless certain directions had been communicated to Cain and Abel, there could be no basis for acceptance or rejection of that which they performed. It has been noted already that Abel's sacrifice was by faith, which of necessity means that it came from the depth of his heart in obedience to certain Divine instructions. Furthermore, since Abel's sacrifice was declared to be "more

excellent," or "fuller," or "more abundant" than Cain's, the implication is that Cain's was not excellent, full, or abundant because it was not in obedience to the Divine instruction.

It is at this very point where we make contact with our subject of the tithe. For man to know that God expected him to tithe there must be, necessarily, instruction to that end. There must be some standard by which one man could be declared obedient through faith in the instructions and another could be rejected because he had not shown faith in the instructions by obeying them. Since Abel brought the more excellent, the fuller, or the more abundant sacrifice, the implication about Cain is that he brought less than the required amount. In commenting concerning the use of *πλείονα* (Heb. 11:4), Westcott points out that its use

has been supposed to justify the general sense of "more excellent," "better," qualitatively only. But the narrative in Genesis suggests that the deeper gratitude of Abel found an outward expression in a more abundant offering.

It is impossible to determine certainly in what Abel's Faith consisted. The fact that he offered "a more abundant" sacrifice shows a fuller sense of the claims of God.¹

It is readily recognized that no specific amount is stated for these offerings, but some standard must be envisioned if one offering was abundant and the other was not.

Thus the tithe could easily be the standard, especially since it is the only objective standard specifically

¹ Brooke Foss Westcott, The Epistle to the Hebrews (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1955), p. 354.

set forth in Scripture. We cannot declare that these offerings pertained to the tithe, for the passage does not state it that way, but it seems fair to conclude that a standard of some kind was used to judge the “gifts” whether they were of faith or whether they were not. Thus the principle of a standard of measurement is required to understand properly the objective basis for determining the acceptance or the rejection of the gifts involved. Lansdell puts it this way:

Unless directions had been communicated to these two worshippers as to the amount or proportion of their property to bring, and if either was at liberty to offer as much or as little as he pleased, then it is not easy to see why Cain should by implication be blamed for bringing less; the occasion being, I take it, a farmer and a grazier each bringing the first-fruits of his increase, not so much as a propitiatory sacrifice (for we are not told they had sinned), but rather as a present or thank-offering to God in token of His lordship over them . . .¹

Before leaving this point that faith implies previous instruction, it is well to note that Scripture reveals that this principle operated in the life of Abraham when Jehovah declared “that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws” (Gen. 26:5). For Abraham to have been so obedient, required that he had received in some unstated way instructions concerning God’s will. Later on we will note this Scripture in greater detail, but right now our purpose has been served to note that this passage simply is in agreement with the fact that God never has left man without certain instructions as a guide for acceptableness before Himself. This was true in the

¹ Henry Lansdell, The Sacred Tenth or Studies of Tithe-Giving Ancient and Modern (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1955), p. 41.

Garden of Eden even before the fall of man when the Lord instructed Adam to superintend the Garden (Gen. 2:15-17). Thus the principle of a previous revelation or instruction seems to be a necessity if we are to understand properly the acceptance or rejection of any man by the Lord. Furthermore, the accepted man is that one who has accepted Jehovah's revelation and by faith has walked in accord with the Divine will so expressed in that revelation.

The Result of Cain's Rejection

It has been noted already that Cain did not come before the Lord in faith and obedience to the Lord's instruction; consequently, he and his offering were rejected. It is necessary, therefore, to consider now the result of this rejection in order to learn if it casts any further light on the subject of tithing. The result of Cain's rejection is presented in verses 5b through 7.

The reaction by Cain. — We read in verse 5b that "Cain was very wroth" because the Lord did not have "respect" toward him and his offering, or gift. This could be expressed more literally by saying, on account of the preference shown to Abel, "it burned Cain sore, and his countenance fell."¹ Apparently this wrath expressed Cain's fierce resentment against his brother, possibly a disappointed rage against himself, and almost certainly it expressed anger against God.² Furthermore, it is very evident that no sorrow

¹ Keil, op. cit., p. 111.

² Whitelaw, op. cit., p. 78.

For sin was in his heart; there was no spirit of self-examination; and there was no inclination to seek the Lord in prayer for light and pardon. Thus clearly Cain was far from a right state of mind and heart and until that condition was remedied, he could present no acceptable gift to the Lord.

The Lord deals with Cain. — Even though Cain was so wrathful; still the Lord did not forthwith abandon him, but chose, rather, to expostulate with him and to instruct him as to how he might receive the same blessing as his brother (vs. 6, 7). In doing this, the Lord asked Cain why he was wrathful and why his countenance had fallen (v. 6). By this means He warned Cain against giving way to anger and discontent “and directed his attention to the cause and consequences of his wrath.”¹ The answer to the question is a further question in verse 7: “if thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?” Admittedly, this is a difficult passage upon which commentators are in disagreement. Some turn to the Septuagint as the solution to the problem, but it has not been satisfactorily demonstrated that the Septuagint is more reliable than the Massoretic Hebrew text.² Therefore,

¹ Keil, OE. cit., p. 111.

² Cf. Ruth Croker Snyder, “Genesis 4:7 Divine Admonition or Divine Acceptance?” (Unpublished Critical Monograph, Grace Theological Seminary, 1949), p. 9. After considering three texts (The Samaritan Pentateuch, the present Septuagint, and the Aramaic Targum of Onkelos) she concludes: “Therefore, since it cannot be established that these texts are correct, for lack of evidence to the contrary, the Hebrew of the Massoretic text must stand as the best text available.”

it would seem better that we retain the Hebrew text and deal with the problem as best we can with that text.

Lansdell seems to place considerable dependence upon the Septuagint for verse 7 in his argument for the tithe. He translated the Greek of verse 7 as follows: "If thou didst rightly offer, but didst not rightly divide, didst thou not sin? Hold thy peace."¹ In his judgment, this dividing referred to some proportion which the Lord expected Cain and all others to give, with it being quite likely the tithe. He also declares that "the rejection of Cain's offering was by very early Christian writers connected with tithing. Tertullian, for instance, in the third century wrote that He rejected the sacrifice of Cain, because what he offered he did not rightly divide."² Lansdell continues this point by stating that Tertullian followed a Latin version which had been made from the Septuagint. He then indicates his favorable attitude to this view in these words: "Some perhaps would call this reading a meaning into the text, rather than drawing one out of it: but before we thus judge let us see what can be said in its favour."³ Although the use of the Septuagint might lend some support to the building up of a case for tithing, nevertheless since that text is not too closely in agreement with the present Hebrew text it probably is better to use the Hebrew text even though the statement

¹ Lansdell, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

²*Ibid.*, pp. 39, 40.

³*Ibid.*, p. 40.

is difficult to handle.

As a translation of the Hebrew of verse 7, Keil gives: "Is there not, if thou art good, a lifting up? But if thou art not good, sin lieth before the door, and its desire is to thee; but thou shouldest rule over it."¹ According to this translation the "lifting up" refers to the "countenance" which has been spoken of in verse 6 as "fallen." By this means, God gave Cain "to understand that his look was indicative of evil thoughts and intentions; for the lifting up of the countenance, i.e. a free, open look, is the mark of a good conscience (Job xi. 15)."² This is further established by the Apostle John when he says that Cain killed his brother "because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous" (I Jo. 3:12). Thus it is clear that Cain's gift was rejected because it was the sacrifice of an evil-doer. Concerning this explanation of Cain's rejection Maclaren says:

Hebrews xi. 4 differs from this view only in making the ground of righteousness prominent, when it ascribes the acceptableness of Abel's offering to faith. . . . Character, then, or, more truly, faith, which is the foundation of a righteous character, determines the acceptableness of worship. Cain's offering had no sense of dependence, no outgoing of love and trust, no adoration, - though it may have had fear, - and no moral element. So it had no sweet odour for God. Abel's was sprinkled with some drops of the incense of lowly trust, and came from a heart which fain would be pure; therefore it was a joy to God.³

¹ Keil, op. cit., pp. 111, 112.

² Ibid., p. 112. Cf. Snyder, op. cit., pp. 22-25.

³ Alexander Maclaren, Expositions of Holy Scripture, Genesis (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, n.d.), p. 15.

Thus the Lord is saying to Cain that if his heart would be in right relation to Him, he thereby would be “good,” he would by faith perform God’s instructions in making his “gift,” and his countenance then would be lifted up. But if he is not in this right relation and thereby he is not “good,” then sin as a wild beast “lieth before the door” greedily desiring him. In summing up the heart attitude of Cain, Mrs. Snyder says:

Well-doing for Cain consisted not in the outward offering but in the right state of mind and feeling. Acceptability with God depends on the inner motives and moral character of the offerer. . . . Cain’s heart was not pure; it had criminal propensity springing from envy and jealousy, which rendered his offering and person unacceptable. His heart was not “subject to the law of God” (Romans 8) because it was “carnal.” Cain’s sacrifice was rejected because it was the sacrifice of an evil doer. His evil works later culminated in murder, for an evil man cannot endure the sight of goodness in another.¹

So the final instruction is that Cain “should rule over it,” that is, “Cain is to rule over the sin which is greedily desiring him, by giving up his wrath, not indeed that sin may cease to lurk for him, but that the lurking evil foe may obtain no entrance into his heart.”² Thus Cain is not commanded to suppress inward temptation, but by heeding the Word of God to resist the power of Satan as the evil one presses from without; thus to allow faith to be demonstrated in his life.

¹ Snyder, *op. cit.*, pp. 20, 21.

² Keil, *op. cit.*, p. 112. Cf. Snyder, *op. cit.*, pp. 34-46.

Summary

In concluding our consideration of the religious practice of Cain and Abel we note that this earliest scriptural record of man presenting an offering before God has been seen to reveal certain basic principles as well as to give clues to what God desired man to do. It seems apparent that since Abel's offering has been described as according to faith, then we are to understand that there had been some previous instruction provided as a standard for man's guidance under those circumstances. Therefore, "in the process of time" Cain and Abel brought offerings unto the Lord. These offerings were not blood sacrifices as is indicated by the word for "offering" which is used in both instances. The word מִנְחָה is a general term for offering which means "gift, tribute, or offering" and which therefore does not speak of a blood sacrifice unless the context requires it to be so understood. On the other hand the word זֶבַח is the word for "slaughter for sacrifice," but since it is not used here we must understand the word for "offering" to be the general meaning of "gift" or "tribute." Therefore, it is seen that both Cain and Abel brought a gift of the increase of their labor to the Lord – the one was rejected and the other accepted, with faith as the deciding factor in determining the Lord's action. Abel was obedient to the Divine instructions through faith, but Cain was not. Therefore, both the person and gift of Abel were accepted and both the person and gift of Cain were rejected.

Since the offerings were "gifts" and since there

must have been Divine instruction of some nature available to both men for the bringing of such gifts, it seems fair to assume that some kind of quantitative standard had been established by the Lord else they would have been ignorant of how to receive the Lord's approval. From the context it is impossible to determine the quantitative factor, but what apparently is established is that man was expected to bring an offering of the increase from his labor obediently through faith. If this were not done, then sin lurked at the door of the human heart desiring to devour the soul. Thus the account of the experience of Cain and Abel probably introduces in the early history of the human race the necessity of proportionate giving as a recognition of the lordship of God.

In further establishing the pre-Abrahamic religious practices it is now necessary to consider Noah who is next recorded in Scripture as having presented an offering before the Lord.

The Religious Practice of Noah

In noting how Noah worshipped before the Lord we shall consider the record of Genesis 8:20-22 wherein is described Noah's act of worship after he and his family had been preserved from the flood and then released from the Ark. We shall be interested to discover any contribution or lack of contribution to our understanding of the subject of the scriptural tithe. Thus far we have had no mention of an altar nor have burnt-offerings been designated — for we note

that even Abel's offering is not named as burnt. Furthermore it is not until long after the time of Cain and Abel that we have the first mention of clean and unclean beasts when Noah was instructed to take a specified number of such beasts into the Ark (Gen. 7:2). It is at the conclusion of the flood that we have the first record of a burnt offering.

Noah Built an Altar

Contrast with Cain and Abel. — The statement that "Noah built an altar unto the Lord" (v. 20) is in contrast to the actions of Cain and Abel, for if they used an altar upon which they placed their gifts, the Lord must have provided it—at least the record is silent concerning these two men even using an altar, let alone erecting one. Some students believe that the sons of Adam brought their gifts into the presence of the Lord at the entrance to the Garden of Eden and that this practice continued until the flood swept away the Garden. At this time the Lord withdrew "the place of His presence, and set up His throne in heaven, from which He would henceforth reveal Himself to man."¹ Whether this be true or not, at least according to the biblical record, here is the first mention of man erecting an altar. Since this altar was unto the Lord there is of necessity the need for pre-instruction for Noah to know to do it and how to do it. But when the instruction was given it is impossible to state.

¹ Keil, op. cit., p. 150.

The Hebrew word for altar. — Here is the first use in the Scriptures of the word מִזְבֵּחַ which means “altar.”

It is a word which is used in many associations,¹ but it does not describe the materials out of which the altar is constructed — the context must designate that characteristic if any designation is to be given. This word is the noun form from זָבַח which means, “to slaughter an animal usually in sacrifice.” Thus the noun means an “altar,” or literally, “a place for the offering of slain animals.”² Hence we learn that an altar in many cases was associated with blood sacrifices and that is the case in hand.

Noah Offered Burnt Offerings

It was an outstanding offering. — Because of the limited supply of animals available following the flood it is remarkable to note that Noah “took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl” (v. 20) for this sacrifice. Inglis comments: “seldom has there been a more liberal offering in proportion to the means of the giver.”³ Again this is in contrast to Cain and Abel who gave out of the abundance of their increase while Noah sacrificed from that in which he had had no increase.

The Hebrew word for burnt-offering. — Noah’s offering is further contrasted with the offerings of Cain and Abel in

¹ For the various associations of this word consult The Englishman’s Hebrew and Chaldee Concordance of the Old Testament (5th. ed.; London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, Limited, 1890).

² Keil, op. cit., p. 150.

³ Quoted by Whitelaw, op. cit., p. 132.

its designation as a “burnt-offering.” The word עֹלָה is from the verb עָלָה which expresses the idea of, “to go up, ascend, climb.” Thus the whole burnt-offering was to be thought of as ascending to heaven into the presence of the Lord. Keil and Delitzsch give the suggestion that after the flood men no longer could go to the entrance of the Garden of Eden to present their offerings to the Lord personally. Therefore it became necessary that their hearts be turned toward heaven and that their prayers and offerings should ascend on high if they were to reach the presence of the Lord.

To give this direction to their offerings, heights or elevated places were erected, from which they ascended toward heaven in fire. From this the offerings received the name of עֹלָה from עָלָה, the ascending, not so much because the sacrificial animals ascended or were raised upon the altar, as because they rose from the altar to heaven (cf. Judg. xx. 40; Jer. xlviii. 15; Amos iv. 10).¹

Thus this offering portrays that which “goes up in the flame to God expressing ascent of the soul in worship.”² Therefore, it was appropriate that the first thing which Noah did was to offer burnt-offerings to thank the Lord for His protection and to pray for His continued mercy in the future. Thus this word for “offering” and its meaning are seen to be very different than the word used to express the offerings of Cain and Abel. This is an offering of self-dedication to God³ and worship of Him while the first recognized

¹ Keil, op. cit., p. 150.

² Brown, Driver, and Briggs, op. cit., p. 750.

³ John D. Davis, A Dictionary of the Bible (4th. revised edition; (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1956), p.550.

the lordship of God through the abundant increase of crops and herds. This was a blood sacrifice from all that Noah had; the first was a “gift, or tribute” given from the increase which each offerer had experienced.

Jehovah’s reaction. — The words, “and the Lord smelled a sweet savour” (v. 21) express Jehovah’s acceptance of the burnt-offering. He was well-pleased with it as expressive of the heart attitude of Noah who thus indicated his gratitude for the Lord’s gracious protection. Hence it became a recognition of the Divine grace by which they had been saved (and only could be saved) through the offering up of the life of another. Noah’s utter dependence upon the Lord and obedience to Him pleased Him greatly. How different this was from Cain’s experience. Jehovah’s acceptance was further expressed in the covenant which promised there should never again be a flood to destroy mankind.

Summary

Previous to the time of Noah no altar had been observed neither had there been any mention made of burnt-offerings, But starting with Noah the altar with its burnt-sacrifices was introduced. These things are in contrast to Cain and Abel, for they apparently indicate the further progress of God’s instruction, or revelation, to man. As has been noted, the offerings of Cain and Abel apparently were gifts from the harvest of their crops, and of the natural increase of their herds in recognition of the lordship of Jehovah. The Hebrew word for “offering” was the general word

for “gift or tribute,” but not the word for blood sacrifice as in the instance of Noah.

Furthermore the distinction between clean and unclean animals is introduced in association with the time of Noah; but no distinction was indicated in Abel’s gift of the firstlings and best of his flock. Hence in the action of Cain and Abel is seen the possibility of proportionate giving of man’s increase from his labor, But in Noah’s offering we see the introduction of the blood-sacrifice on an altar bespeaking the soul’s worship of God and the recognition that he could be saved only through the offering of the life of another.

Therefore, in these two earliest records in the Bible of man’s approach to God we have, (1) that which seemingly is proportionate giving and which is possibly, if not probably, the seed-plot for the later tithe, and (2) that which is the introduction of worship through blood sacrifice. It is to be noted that both of these institutions were practiced by Abraham and also they were very prominent throughout all of Jehovah’s dealings with the nation of Israel. Apparently, then, we have the privilege of watching progressive revelation unfold before us in these accounts of Cain and Abel and of Noah. Now let us take a brief look at the heathen world to see if there is any relation between their religious practices and these which we have observed.

The Heathen Religious Practices

For our purposes it is not essential that we go into

detail to establish the religious practices of the ancient heathen peoples, for it is well known that a characteristic of the human family is that of being religious – even the so-called atheist has atheism as his religion. But our need is to note if the heathen religious practices bear any resemblance to scriptural teaching and practice and to draw any justifiable conclusion therefrom.

Offerings

Offerings of various kinds made to some form of deity can be traced from the dawn of human history. In the Bible they begin with the two eldest sons of Adam, Cain and Abel, who offered both a vegetable, and a firstling offering respectively (Gen. 4:3, 4). Other kinds of offerings also are described throughout the Old Testament, as: the burnt offering (Gen. 8:20), the sacrificial meal offering (Gen. 31:54), and the drink offering (Gen. 35:14). The demonstration of the religious characteristic of man is further seen in the elaborate rituals of sacrifice which existed among the great nations of antiquity of whom we have any record. This is true of nations long before the days of Moses, as verified by both the secular and scriptural writers. No great number of illustrations are necessary to establish the fact of heathen offerings, for it is common knowledge which needs no substantiation. However, we shall present several illustrations.

The ancient Akkadian records abundantly reveal the heathen recognition of duty to their deities of which the

following translations are indicative:

May food-offerings be borne (for) their gods and goddesses.
Without forgetting let them improve, build their shrines,
Let the black-headed wait on their gods.¹

From a Babylonian poem, entitled "Enûma Elish," we note the attitude of that ancient people toward their deities in the following instructions:

Let their offerings be brought for their gods (and) their goddess;
Let their god be not forgotten, (but) let them support (him)²

In writing concerning the "Religion and Conscience in Ancient Egypt," Petrie gives the following translation of statements which show that the Egyptians recognized their duty to present offerings to deity:

1. "I have not diminished the offerings of the gods;"
2. "Sacrifice: for god looks on the offerer; but he neglects those who neglect him."³

A "High Place of Gazer" is described by Barton as one of the high places of the Canaanites before the coming or the Israelites as one where, "in all probability firstborn children had been sacrificed to the deity of the high place."⁴ Scripture also records the fact of child sacrifices

¹ E. A. Speiser (trans.), Tablet VI, lines 117-120, "Akkadian Myths and Epics," Ancient Near Eastern Texts, ed. James B. Pritchard (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1950), p. 69.

² Alexander Heidel (trans.), Tablet VI, lines 116, 117. "Enûma Elish," The Babylonian Genesis (2nd. ed.; Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), p. 50.

³ Quoted by Lansdell, op. cit., p. 2.

⁴ George A. Barton, Archaeology and the Bible (Seventh edition; Philadelphia: American Sunday School Union, 1937), p. 215

in the time of King Manasseh (II Kings 2:6; 23:10, etc.).

The “Rae Shamra Tablets,” which date back to about the time of Moses record laws similar to those of Leviticus, and they also employ the same terms of the Hebrew offerings as the burnt offering, the whole burnt offering, the guilt offering, and the peace offering.¹

Tithes

Practically universal in practice. — Among the various nations of antiquity tithing also played a large part in their religious and political life. Simpson states that “from the beginning of known history we find that man recognized it as a duty to present a portion of his income to his god. The amount so given was almost invariably one-tenth.”² The same writer further declares that tithing was practiced very early in ancient Chaldea and in Babylon as early as 2100 B.C.³ The Encyclopedia Britannica agrees concerning the ancient practice of the tithe in these words: “this custom was almost universal in the ancient world, and can be traced in Babylon, Persia, Arabia, Egypt, Greece, Rome and even in China.”⁴

¹ Joseph P. Free, Archaeology and Bible History (Wheaton, Ill.: Van Kampen Press, 1950), p. 112.

² Simpson, This World's Goods, p. 88.

³Ibid.

⁴ Sydney Herbert Mellone, “Tithes,” in Encyclopedia Britannica (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1952), Vol. 22, p. 252. For an interesting “Chronology of Tithe Paying” consult Lansdell, at the end of his volume; no page numbers are given.

The nature of the tithes. — The tithes consisted in many instances of the giving of a certain proportion of the products of one's industry, or of the spoils of war as tributes to their gods. Mellone describes them as "a form of tribute of a tenth of a man's property or produce, connected politically with taxation, and religiously with the offering of 'firstfruits' to deity."¹ Herodotus reports that the Lydians made an offering of a tithe of their booty² and it is recorded that the Phoenicians and Carthaginians annually sent a tithe to the Tyrian Hercules.³ Under certain circumstances the tithes were paid regularly and under other circumstances they were only occasionally. Furthermore, depending upon the particular situation they were either voluntary or prescribed. It is also of interest to note that the Egyptians gave one-fifth of their increase to Pharaoh at the time of the famine in Joseph's day (Gen. 47:24). In some instances the records reveal that a sixth and varying fractional amounts were given to the gods and their temples. However, as the records are examined it becomes apparent that the tenth was the more generally prevailing proportion. With reference to the Babylonian procedure, Sayce writes:

The temple and priests were supported by the contributions of the people — partly obligatory and partly voluntary. The most important among them were the "tithes" paid upon all produce. The tithes were contributed by all classes of the population, from the king to the

¹Ibid.

² Quoted by Davis, op. cit., p. 783.

³ Davis, op. cit., p. 783.

peasant; and lists exist which record the amounts severally due from the tenants of an estate.¹

The origin of the tithes. — The secular writers attempt to account for the practice of the tithe without taking into consideration the possibility of Divine revelation as the original source. They naturally have failed to take into account the fact that the natural unsaved man would corrupt the teaching and practice from that which God originally intended. Therefore, we have man's attempt to explain the origin in words similar to the following:

The tax probably originated in a tribute laid by a conqueror or ruler on his subjects; and we may assume that the custom of dedicating a tenth of the spoils of war to the gods led to a religious extension of the term, the original offerings to deity being "firstfruits."²

It is manifest that the principle of the tithe would have originated from either God or man and since the principle is inseparable from much of the Bible we dare not ascribe its origin to man. Therefore, we must see it as having originated with God. That being the case, we are compelled to conclude that although the heathen peoples have corrupted the principle from its original intent, still they have retained the idea that it is necessary to recognize deity with a proportion of the increase of their labor. Furthermore we must recognize that since the heathen practiced tithing long before the time of Abraham, the true child of God must have had the true knowledge of that principle also.

¹ Sayce, quoted by Lansdell, op. cit., p. 14.

² Mellone, op. cit., p. 252.

Therefore we should not be surprised when we read that Abraham tithed, but rather we should be surprised if he had not practiced it. Furthermore we should expect that believers practiced it before Abraham's day even though their actions are not recorded. Hence since the offerings of Cain and Abel very likely were not blood sacrifices, but were gifts to Jehovah in recognition of the fruit of their labor, it is not incredible nor unscriptural to think of them as probably the tithe. At least the possibility cannot be denied and no other explanation seems to fit the record so satisfactorily.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have tried to consider carefully a fair and scriptural analysis of the passages which throw light on the religious practices of believers before the time of Abraham and also we have sketched the religious practices of the heathen for the same period to see what correlation may exist between the religious practices of these two groups. It seems that both groups practiced two things in that they offered blood-sacrifices and also they gave gifts to their deity. Frequently this was on a proportionate basis in relation to the fruitage of their own labors with tithing as the more common practice of proportionate giving.

We have noted that the offerings of Cain and Abel were not to be thought of as belonging to the blood-sacrifice type since the Hebrew word used to designate their offerings was not the usual word which expressed "slaughter for sacrifice."

The word used to describe their offerings was that which was the general term for an offering which denoted a “gift” or “tribute.” Further support to this understanding of the term is given by virtue of the phrase, “in the process of time,” which apparently indicates that at the end of an extended period of time these two men brought gifts to Jehovah from the abundance of the fruit of their labors. This, then, strongly suggests some form of proportionate giving as the remaining alternative since the offering is not designated as a “slaughter for sacrifice.”

Furthermore the absence of the designation of sin until after the offering of Cain had been rejected also indicates that the offering was not to have been one in atonement for sin. The context names sin only in connection with the offering presented, not in the expressed need of a sin-offering. When Jehovah accepted Abel’s offering we noted that He first accepted the person of Abel and then his offering. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews explains it on the basis of faith, that is, knowing God’s Word he obediently observed it and thus he was accepted in both his person and offering. But the very opposite was true of Cain, who knowing God’s Word did not observe it. Therefore, he was rejected in both his person and offering because he did not by faith obey the Divine instruction. This points up the principle that God is not interested in the offering primarily, but in the person first of all, and then in the offering. Thus He is interested in the offering when it is presented on the right basis.

The observance of the principle of faith necessitates the predication of an original revelation of instruction which is to be obeyed, thus expressing faith and confidence in the Giver of the revelation. Since, then, we must recognize some form of original instruction, we have the necessary explanation for the religious practices of the heathen. It is true that they have corrupted the original instructions, as would be expected of the natural unsaved man, but nevertheless we see them continuing the two-fold pattern of approach to their god through blood sacrifice and proportionate giving of some form.

Among believers Noah is seen as an example of those who faithfully offered true blood-sacrifices in conformity to God's will, thus expressing gratitude for Divine protection and a desire for further communications of grace.

Thus it is we have seen in the pre-Abrahamic religious practices the two-fold principle of worship which so markedly characterized Abraham's religious life and also life under the Mosaic Law. This two-fold principle of blood sacrifice, and proportionate giving was practiced by believers and by heathen as well, even though they had corrupted God's original intent.

Therefore, it seems that a reasonable basis has been established in antiquity for the principle and practice of proportionate giving which proportion later in the Bible became designated as the tenth, or tithe. Since we have

clarified this principle, at least with a strong possibility, from the standpoint of antiquity, we move on to the further development of the scriptural tithe in the light of Abraham's religious practices.

CHAPTER II

ABRAHAMIC RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

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Introduction

In the further development of this subject we now move to consider Abraham and his religious experiences and especially his tithing experience. The nature of the subject is such that we are not concerned with an academic discussion of archaeological evidences for and against the historicity of Abraham, for there seems to be no good reason for rejecting the scriptural record of one called Abraham. Furthermore, we are not here concerned with the problem of the date in which he lived, for a few years one way or the other do not affect our problem. Hence, we are content to think of Abraham's day as about 2000 B. C.¹ Our problem is to get an accurate picture, as far as it is possible, of his religious life, especially in its association with the subject of the tithe.

In considering the religious background of Abraham, it must not be forgotten that Scripture records the fact that his nearer ancestors served other gods (Josh. 24:2). This means that their religion was at least corrupted by the prevalent

¹ Free, op. cit., p. 48.

polythesism [sic] of the religion of Babylon.¹ At Haran Abraham was still within the limits of the influence of the Babylonian culture and religion and even in Canaan he was not beyond the reach of its influence, for Babylonian culture and religion had spread widely among the Canaanites.² But Abraham's faith was distinguished from the belief of the great majority of his contemporaries of whom we have any knowledge,³ for he believed in God who is Almighty (Gen. 17: 1); who is everlasting (Gen. 21:33); who is the most high (Gen. 14:22); who is the possessor of heaven and earth, that is, the actual and lawful Lord of all (Gen. 14:22; 24: 3); and who is the righteous Judge, in other words the moral governor of all the earth (Gen. 18:25). Thus Abraham saw God as the absolute ruler of the world who controls all events by virtue of His absolute knowledge and who gives and who withholds according to His perfect sovereign will.

According to his faith, Abraham worshipped, obeyed God, and faithfully guarded His honor. This was the key to Abraham's life of faith. It is often asked how he came to show forth such a faith. Perhaps we cannot state all of the factors involved, but we know there was a religious heritage which had been handed down from each generation to its succeeding generation as witnessed by the line of faithful believers beginning with Abel. Involved with this source of

¹ Stephen Herbert Langdon, "Babylonian and Assyrian Religion," in Encyclopedia Britannica (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1952), Vol. 2, p. 857.

² Lansdell, op. cit., p. 46.

³ Davis, op. cit., p. 10.

information would be the primitive revelations which God gave to various believers as He willed. Furthermore it must be remembered that Abraham himself was granted special experiences and even revelations by dreams, visions, and theophanies (Gen. 12:7; 15:1, 12, 17; 17:1; 18:1, 2; 22:1, 2). “Christophanies are as conceivable in Abraham’s time as is the manifestation of Christ at a later age.”¹ We now turn to consider some of the specific factors in Abraham’s religious life.

Abraham Offered Sacrifices

It has been noted previously that the Divine record is silent concerning whether Cain and Abel built an altar, but it was noted that it is possible they presented their gifts personally unto the Lord at the gate of the Garden of Eden. Then when we came to consider Noah and his religious life, we found the first mention of man having erected an altar for blood sacrifices – this Noah did when he and his family were released from the Ark. Now as we note the life of Abraham, we discover the second record in the Bible of man erecting an altar. Undoubtedly it is true that in between these acts of Noah and Abraham, other believers had observed this practice, but the Lord has not seen fit to preserve the account.

Secular history reveals that the heathen built many altars to their multitudinous gods at least during the period

¹Ibid.

previous to Abraham so that it is reasonable to believe that their practice simply was a corruption of the practice of God's people. Thus when Abraham obediently followed the Lord's leading into the land of Canaan we are not surprised to read twice that he built "an altar unto the Lord" (Gen. 12: 7, 8), for this is exactly what we should have expected him to do. As a man of faith, Abraham could have expressed that faith in no other way than to follow obediently the instructions of the Lord. Thus we have him continuing the practice which began at least as early as the time of Noah. The word for Abraham's "altar" is the same as for Noah's "altar," מִזְבֵּחַ which refers to an altar of "slaughter for sacrifice."

Thus it is to be assumed that Abraham offered a blood sacrifice even though it is not so stated. It is of great interest, to say the least, that the first specific mention of Abraham making a "burnt-offering" is when he offered Isaac in obedience to Jehovah's instruction (Gen. 22:3). The same word, עֹלָה, is used of this sacrifice as that of Noah's. Therefore, in the light of these considerations we must conclude that Abraham practiced the offering of sacrifices which later became a vital part of the ritual of the Jew's religion under the Law, but all of this showed forth his conformity to Jehovah's will.

Abraham Practiced Circumcision

Circumcision became a part of the Mosaic ritual and it is recognized as a practice for the Jews which began with their father, Abraham, as a token recognizing the covenantal

relation between Jehovah and themselves. It became the initiatory rite into the covenant privileges of the family of God represented by Abraham through Isaac. As a rite, it was instituted by the Lord and enjoined upon Abraham himself who was to be circumcised and upon all his male descendants and male slaves whether born in his family or brought in by purchase (Gen. 17:10-14, 20-27). Thus we find that Abraham practiced this rite even before the birth of Isaac.

But we also note that Abraham was not the first of the human family to use circumcision, for “there were other circumcised nations as well as the Hebrews, especially the Egyptians . . . , and they as early as 3000 B. C.”¹ However, certain other nations with whom Israel had contacts and associations were uncircumcised, such as the Philistines, Syrians, Assyrians, and Babylonians and various other nationalities.² Consequently, the term, “uncircumcised,” became to the Jews a term of reproach and it became practically synonymous with the term “heathen” (Gen. 34:14; Judges 14:3; 15:18).

Hence it is seen that Abraham in all probability had previous knowledge of the practice of circumcision, but it became to him and his children a Divinely [sic] instituted rite for them as a “token of the covenant betwixt” (Gen. 17:11) Jehovah, and Abraham, and Abraham’s seed. Thus it was a constant reminder to the Jews of the Abrahamic Covenant and

¹Ibid., p. 142.

² Ibid. Cf. Jer. 9:25, 26.

furthermore that which many heathen had practiced became endowed with new meaning to the "chosen people." Hence, Abraham was used of Jehovah to institute a rite for the Jews which would become a part of their religious life in conjunction with the Divinely ordained blood-sacrifices which antedated the time of Abraham. Here, again, Jehovah is seen enlarging upon His instructions previously given to men, and by this means progressive revelation is viewed in its operation. Those who were of faith observed faithfully the Lord's instructions in these matters so that it could be said of them as of Abraham, that "by faith" (Heb. 11:8) they lived.

Abraham Practiced Tithing

We have now arrived at the place in Scripture where it is recorded of Abraham that he gave a tithe of his spoils to the King-Priest, Melchizedek (Gen. 14:17-24); It will be necessary that we examine this passage carefully, for this is the first specific mention of actual tithing in the biblical record. Much has been written concerning this act of Abraham and its relation to the subject of tithing for Christians; hence, we cannot avoid dealing with it carefully if we are to come to a correct understanding of the scriptural tithe. It must be determined how much hearing this passage has on the subject and especially with reference to the New Testament phase of it. At the outset of our consideration it must be noted that this instance of tithe-payment antedates by more than four centuries the establishment of the Mosaic Law so that this example cannot be designated as

legalistic according to the standards of the Mosaic Law.

Now we must proceed to a careful analysis of the passage.

Abraham was Approved by God

Because Abraham's nephew, Lot, had been captured by some invading kings, Abraham set out with three hundred and eighteen trained servants and some allies (vs. 13, 24) to deliver Lot. The campaign was a brilliant military success in which Lot's captors were defeated and Lot was set free (vs. 15, 16). Thus, returning with the spoils of war, Abraham was met near Jerusalem by the King-Priest, Melchizedek, who refreshed him with bread and wine, blessed him, praised God for victory, and received from Abraham a tenth of the spoils. Now let us consider the account more closely.

Abraham was met by Melchizedek (v. 18). — This man was a unique individual being at the same time King of Salem, and "priest of the most high God." Very probably "Salem" was none other than Jerusalem, which means "founding of peace, or possession of peace,"¹ for the ancient name of the city was Salem, and then later Jerusalem, even before the conquest of Canaan by the Israelites.² David's comparison of his Lord with Melchizedek, in Ps. 110:4, is very appropriate if Melchizedek was king of the same city as David. As "priest of the most high God" Melchizedek undoubtedly was an eminently holy man, and his description indicates that he

¹ Keil, op.cit., p. 207.

² Davis, op. cit., p. 489.

was a believer in the true God, thus showing there were some believers in that day who were in high offices among men. The flow of the passage would seem to indicate that he possibly [sic] was acquainted with Abraham which could mean that Abraham had visited this priest upon other occasions. The possibility of this can be seen when we take cognizance of the fact that for a while, at least, Abraham lived within a day's journey of Salem (Jerusalem). Thus it may be concluded that this was neither the first nor the last occasion of a visit to Melchizedek by Abraham.¹ How frequently he may have gone we cannot even guess, but that he went more than once seems highly probable, for the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews declares that Melchizedek "received tithes of Abraham" (Heb. 7:6). The plural number of the word certainly suggests more than one visit by Abraham to Melchizedek for the purpose of the presentation of his tithes to the Lord's high priest.

The word for "priest" is כֹּהֵן, which means one who undertakes another's cause, hence one who acts as a mediator between God and man.² Whitelaw says, "the occurrence of this term, here mentioned for the first time, implies the existence of a regularly-constituted form of worship by means of priests and sacrifices."³ If this implication is true, and it seems to be very probable and plausible, then there hardly can be any question but that Abraham had offered tithes

¹ Lansdell, op. cit., p. 48.

² Whitelaw, op. cit., p. 209.

³Ibid.

to Melchizedek upon previous occasions.

The true God was recognized by both Melchizedek and Abraham by the title, “El Elion” (אֱלֹהִים), which is a proper name for the Supreme Deity and which occurs only here in this narrative of Abraham’s conquest of the kings.¹ This name for deity is composed of אֱל, from the same root as Elohim, which signifies the “Strong One,” and of יִי which describes God as the High, Highest, Exalted, or the Supreme. The first word seldom is “applied to God without some qualifying attribute or cognomen, as El-Shaddai, or El, the God of Israel” and the second word sometimes is “used in conjunction with Jehovah (Ps. vii. 18), and with Elohim (Ps. lvii. 3), while sometimes it stands alone (Ps. xxi. 8).”² The second of these words occurs frequently, as in Num.24: 16; Deut. 22:18; Ps. 7:18; and 9:2. Thus we see a Gentile king, Melchizedek, who knew Jehovah by the name “most high God” and who also was a priest of this same most high God whose distinctive character is that He is the “possessor of heaven and earth” (v. 19). Again this calls our attention to the fact that a knowledge of the true God was not lacking amidst all the corruption of heathendom, even among those who were in high political office. Also those of like faith recognized each other, as Abraham and Melchizedek.

Melchizedek “brought forth bread and wine” as he went to meet Abraham. Students are not at all agreed concerning

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

the import of this act. Delitzsch states the meaning as, “to supply the exhausted warriors with food and drink, but more especially as a mark of gratitude to Abram, who had conquered for them peace, freedom, and prosperity.”¹ This seems a plausible explanation, but it is to be questioned whether the situation has been taken into account sufficiently, for since Abraham and his men had the spoils of the conquered enemy in their possession, it was hardly necessary that Melchizedek should provide refreshment of bread and wine. Lightfoot’s idea is that it was mainly a symbol, not of the transference of the soil of Canaan to the patriarch Abraham, but rather, of these materials as being the chief productions of the ground.² But there is nothing in the passage which seemingly would elicit such an explanation. The Romish idea that his act was sacrificial is not supported by the context, for it is “precluded by the statement that he brought forth bread and wine before the people, and before God.”³

In the light of the context, it would seem to be better to recognize this as a priestly benediction upon Abraham and a spiritual refreshment which it conferred upon his soul.⁴ However, there seems to be more to the meaning of this act, for the writer to the Hebrews gives us to understand

¹ Quoted by by Keil, op. cit., p. 207.

² As stated by Whitelaw, op. cit., p. 209.

³ Whitelaw, op. cit., p. 209.

⁴Ibid.

that Melchizedek is a type of Christ.¹ Therefore, Scofield's comment seems to bring out the deeper meaning when he says: "the type strictly applies to the priestly work of Christ in resurrection, since Melchizedek presents only the memorials of sacrifice, bread and wine."² Thus in Abraham's meeting with Melchizedek there is the seedplot of the believer today meeting his High Priest, Christ, who is the antitype of Melchizedek the type.

Abraham was blessed by Melchizedek (vs. 19, 20). —

The form of the blessing is poetical and it is comprised of two parallel members³ which express the benediction of the priest Melchizedek who stood apart from all other priests isolated and alone. Abraham apparently recognized Melchizedek as priest, for he availed himself of his sacred offices.

Accordingly Melchizedek blessed Abraham on God's behalf (v. 19), and on the other hand he blessed God on Abraham's behalf (v. 20). In summing up Melchizedek's priestly function Candlish says:

This brief and comprehensive form of benediction is, in truth, a summary of the entire priestly function; and it brings out, as comprised in one single and simple act, the whole ministry proper to the priest, as interposing or mediating between the great God in heaven and the servant or worshipper of God on earth. What is a priest, but one through whose effectual offerings and intercession the blessing of God comes down upon man; and through whom, again, from man's deliverance, blessing,

¹ Heb. 7.

² C. Scofield (ed.), The Holy Bible (New and improved ed.; New York: Oxford University Press, 1945), p. 23, note #1.

³ Keil, op. cit., p. 207.

and honour, and glory, and power, redound to God
“in the highest.”¹

In this connection, it should be noted that in a very inferior sense men may bless one another and may even bless God on behalf of one another. Furthermore, men may under certain circumstances, convey Divine blessings upon others as when Isaac blessed Jacob (Gen. 27:27) and when Jacob blessed Joseph (Gen. 48:15). Thus, whereas the benedictions pronounced by Isaac and Jacob were authoritative, Melchizedek’s benediction implied more and was both authoritative and efficacious. In the words of Candlish:

He blesses as one having right to bless – as one whose ministry really and actually does bring good to man on the one hand, and praise to God on the other. What good does it bring to man? Is it not all the fulness of God? What praise does it bring to God? Is it not all the praise of man’s salvation?²

When Melchizedek pronounced this blessing, he revealed that he probably was acquainted with Abraham and knew him from previous occasions, for he spoke of Abraham in the words, “blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth” (v. 19). We have already considered this title by which both Melchizedek and Abraham knew God as the “most high God,” but now Melchizedek reveals that they know Him as the only true God by the additional clause, “possessor of heaven and earth.” The title “El Elion” appears here without the article and according to Keil this is indicative of “a proper name for the supreme God, the God over all (cf.

¹ Candlish, op. cit., pp. 170, 171.

²Ibid., p. 171.

Ex. xviii. 11)."¹ Furthermore, the use of "ל" with this title for God and following a passive verb as here used, indicates the efficient cause.² It is well, also, to note that He is further known as the true God by the identifying clause, "possessor of heaven and earth." The word, "possessor," is קָנָה from קָנָה which means "to erect, set up, hence found or create."³ Thus the word in this use identified Abraham's God as "creator and possessor," hence He is "founder of the heaven and the earth."⁴

A second blessing was pronounced when Melchizedek declared, "blessed be the most high God" (v. 20); which is the ascription of praise to God for the victory over all of Abraham's enemies. Thus there is this communion between God and man of which the priest is the minister. Also a double blessing has been achieved as stated by Candlish: "Between the two parties, a transference or blessed exchange takes place, the highest property of each being imparted or ascribed to the other."⁵ Thus Abraham has the benefit that his God is the "founder of the heaven and the earth" and God has the glory of Abraham's victory over his enemies. In the face of the pronouncement of Melchizedek's double blessing what can Abraham do?

¹ Keil, op. cit., p. 207.

² Whitelaw, op. cit., p. 210; Keil, op. cit., p. 207.

³ Whitelaw, op. cit., p. 210.

⁴ Keil, op. cit., p. 207.

⁵ Candlish, op. cit., p. 171.

Abraham Tithed

Abraham was familiar with the Babylonian tithe. —

This priestly welcome brought forth from Abraham “tithes of all” (v. 20). The performance of this act was not something new, for undoubtedly in his boyhood Babylonian home he must have been familiar with the practice since the cuneiform inscriptions contain frequent references to the tithe. In writing of this subject with reference to the practice in Babylonia, Sayce says:

It went back to the pre-Semitic age of Chaldea, and the great temples of Babylonia were largely supported by the esra or tithe which was levied upon prince and peasant alike. That the god should receive a tenth of the good things which, it was believed, he had bestowed upon mankind was not considered to be asking too much. There are many tablets in the British Museum which are receipts for the payment of the tithe to the great temple of the sun-god at Sippara, in the time of Nebuchadnezzar and his successors.¹

Although the early records establish the fact of the practice of the tithe by many of the heathen and also it is very probable that Abraham may have been familiar with the practice from his early home-life, still that is hardly a sufficient basis upon which to predicate his gift of tithes to Melchizedek. It has already been seen that he and Melchizedek were believers in the true God, “the founder of the heaven and the earth.” Hence, this fact would suggest that they had certain instructions from God Himself rather than that they followed the heathen method in both the giving of tithes and the exercise of the office of priesthood. The experience with the heathen tithe conceivably could have made

¹ Quoted by Landsell, op. cit., p. 47.

them amenable to its practice, but when they came to know the true God, then it would be natural to follow His instructions whether they included some, or all, or none of the religious forms with which they formerly had been familiar in the heathen worship. Thus it is necessary to assume an earlier revelation, even as we have noted was a necessity in connection with Cain and Abel and their sacrifice – the exercise of faith demands a revelation of some nature as the basis for faith to know what is to be believed and lived.

It is frequently asked, to what extent did Abraham tithe: was it a tenth of all of his income, or was it a tenth of all of the spoils only? If it was all of his income, was the tithe then something paid as a due, or if it was a tenth of the spoils, was it given voluntarily? Neither the Hebrew of the passage nor the Greek of the Epistle to the Hebrews explains the word “all” (v. 20). Some students of this subject say it must have been all of his income that he tithed, others say both his income and spoils were involved, while still others hold that it was the spoils only which were tithed.

In keeping with the clear hermeneutical principle that we should “give preference to the clearest and most evident interpretation of a passage,”¹ it seems that the “all” should be confined to the spoils only, for the context deals specifically with the victory and its spoils and not with any of Abraham’s usual business affairs. It is hardly

¹ Ram, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

conceivable that he took with him tithes of his income when he started out on his military exploit. Furthermore, he had not yet returned home where he could secure tithes from his income to present them to Melchizedek. Hence, it seems better to consider the “all” as very probably the spoils only.

As previously noted, the passage strongly suggests that Abraham had visited Melchizedek upon other occasions when probably he gave the tithe of his income; thus the two men were not strangers to each other. Also it is to be noted that although Heb. 7:4 does not use the word “all,” still when it states that Abraham tithed the spoils the more probable implication is that at that time he tithed only the spoils since he had not yet been home after his campaign.

Furthermore, nothing in either the Hebrew, or the Greek texts clarifies whether the tithes were given voluntarily or as a matter of due. Hence, the best that seemingly can be said of this matter is that it was done in conformity to the instructions from the Lord with which both of them were familiar. Nothing in the contexts militates against such a conclusion. Therefore, it is necessary to notice that whether he tithed his entire income at this time, or only the spoils of warfare, in either event it would have been a tithe of his increase that he gave to the King-Priest. Thus, his action is an example of proportionate giving based upon one's increase or income, and this is the earliest specific record in Scripture of such an act. But as has been previously considered, it is more probable that Cain

and Abel made their gifts from their income rather than that Abel offered a blood-sacrifice in contrast to Cain's bloodless offering.

Therefore, it now seems that what was a hint of proportionate giving by Cain and Abel has become a reality in the life of Abraham. Furthermore, the heathen practice of proportionate giving, which was so largely the tithe, is better accounted for by noting that apparently the heathen put into their religions that which God originally had instructed man to do. Of course the heathen corrupted the practice of the truth, but nevertheless, their practice is better explained as having had its beginning in the Lord's early instructions, than that they all came to practice the same principle so universally as a result of their own thinking. An early revelation from God is the better explanation of the largely universal practice of the tithe – no other reasoning fits the condition so well.

Abraham acknowledged the divine priesthood of Melchizedek. – The writer of Heb. 7:7 says that “without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better” and by this declaration he is saying that Melchizedek was greater in dignity than Abraham by virtue of his office as priest of the most high God. A demonstration of this superiority was that Abraham willingly paid his tithes to him. This is, then, an example of the principle that when a man gives or pays a tribute or dues to another, he, the giver, acknowledges for the moment the superiority of the receiver.¹ This is exactly

¹ Lansdell, op. cit., p. 47.

what Abraham did in giving tithes to Melchizedek. However, he not only acknowledged this superiority, but he did it on the basis that Melchizedek was the priest of the true God who was the “founder of the heaven and the earth.”

One further word which describes Abraham is that he did this thing publicly where all could see. Keil says, “giving the tenth was a practical acknowledgment of the divine priesthood of Melchizedek; for the tenth was, according to the general custom, the offering presented to the Deity.”¹ Davis also writes in a similar way:

Abraham recognized him as a priest of the true God and publicly testified to sharing the same or a kindred faith by paying tithes to him who was representative of God Most High, to the priest who had ascribed the victory to the Creator of heaven and earth (cp. Acts x. 35).²

In discussing the meaning of Abraham’s tithe, Candlish points out that the paying of the tithe whether in the Bible or other ancient writings always was intimately associated with the priesthood and the offering of sacrifices. He further states that the priest, functioning as the mediator, received tithes as a token in acknowledgment that everything belonged to the Lord and thereby was being freely dedicated and consecrated to the Lord. He explains it in these words:

For as the ordained and appointed medium or channel of communication between God and man, the priest not merely conveyed the gift of God to man, but conveyed also man’s

¹ Keil, *op. cit.*, p. 207.

² Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 489.

gifts to God. The blessing bestowed on the part of God passed through his hands, and so also did the offices and services rendered on the part of man. Such is the priestly function, as discharged by Melchizedek and acknowledged by Abram.¹

Thus Abraham recognized the divine priesthood of Melchizedek and publicly testified to sharing the same faith with him by paying his tithes to him.

Abraham acknowledged Melchizedek's God as the true God (v. 22). — When the king of Sodom offered all of the recaptured goods to Abraham except that he requested that the people be restored to him (v. 21), Abraham refused the offer lest by that means the king of Sodom could say that he had made Abraham rich (v. 23). By rejecting this offer, Abraham declared that Melchizedek's God was the true God, for he had sworn before the Lord that he would not keep any of the booty (vs. 22, 23). That Abraham took an oath in this matter is seen in the phrase, "I have lift up mine hand" (v. 22), which was the common form for taking an oath in that day² (cf. Deut. 32:40; Ezek. 20:5, 6). It is to be noted that this solemn oath was taken before the Lord — thereby Abraham acknowledged "himself as the servant of this God by calling him by the name Jehovah."³

The use of this title "in the present document, proves the antiquity of its use as a designation of the Deity."⁴

¹ Candlish, op. cit., p. 172.

² Whitelaw, op. cit., p. 210; Keil, op. cit., p. 207.

³ Keil, op. cit., p. 207.

⁴ Whitelaw, op. cit., p. 210.

Thus it is noted that in this ancient record Abraham is credited with having equated the two titles for the true God, "Jehovah" on the one hand, and "the founder of the heaven and the earth" on the other hand. By this means Abraham has identified Jehovah as the God of Melchizedek and has further established Melchizedek as the priest of the true God. Therefore, these facts all point up the great knowledge which both Abraham and Melchizedek had concerning the true God; their faith in Him is in marked contrast to the heathendom with which they were surrounded and out of which they had come.

Conclusion

In our consideration thus far, certain significant things have been noted and from the viewpoint of progressive revelation, a progress in the revelation and practice of truth has become apparent. (1) In the offerings by Cain and Abel, it is manifest that no blood sacrifice was involved as a requirement, for there is no mention of sin as expressing the need for a sacrifice and neither is an altar mentioned. (2) Apparently Cain and Abel brought gifts from the increase of their flocks and crops (from their income, in other words), for the Hebrew word means gift, or tribute, rather than blood sacrifice. Thus nothing in the context militates against the possibility and probability that this was proportionate giving. (3) The actions of Adam's two eldest sons presuppose instructions which they were to follow to be well pleasing unto the Lord. The fact that Abel is described as

having acted “by faith” requires a basis of instruction.

(4) Noah built an altar upon which he offered burnt sacrifices.

The Hebrew word for “altar” comes from that which means “slaughter for sacrifice” and the word for “offering” means “burnt sacrifice”; thus it is manifest that these offerings are not the same kind as those of Cain and Abel.

(5) Noah’s action also required previous instruction so that what he did would indicate his faith and thus meet with God’s approbation. (6) Abraham observed certain religious practices such as the offering of burnt sacrifices upon an altar, and the institution of circumcision for himself and his descendants in obedience by faith to the Lord’s instructions.

(7) Abraham worshipped the true God with his tithes, and Melchizedek served the true God as His priest before men.

They knew Him as “Jehovah,” and as the “founder of the heaven and the earth.” (8) Abraham recognized Melchizedek as priest of the true God by giving the tithes of the spoils to Jehovah through Melchizedek as the God appointed mediator. (9) The tithing by Abraham can be accounted for satisfactorily only be [sic] recognizing that it must have been based upon previous instruction. (10) From the possibility (and even probability) of proportionate giving in Genesis 4 we have arrived at the actuality of it in Abraham’s tithe. Also it should not be overlooked that the heathen practice of tithing strongly indicated that believers, too, knew of tithing (and probably practiced it), although the record does not specifically declare it until the time of Abraham. (11) Thus altar worship, giving, and tithing are seen to be very ancient religious

practices according to the biblical record as well as the secular. These two ancient religious principles later were incorporated into the Law of Moses, as well. (12) Here it should be observed that although these altars (with their appropriate sacrifices), and these gifts required certain instructions for their acceptable observance before the Lord, still the instructions are not in the realm of legal observance, for there is no hint of specific penalties for failures as the Law system required. Therefore, the original sacrifices and tithes were not established on a legal principle but rather on the grace principle.

Thus far it has been necessary to assume that Cain, Abel, Noah, and Abraham acted in their religious lives in conformity to certain unrecorded instructions or revelations. In view of these assumptions, it is logical to ask whether there is no firmer basis for our understanding of the actions of these men than mere assumptions (which undoubtedly are correct, but which lack the solidity of a chapter and verse reference)? Apparently this question can be answered for Abraham, especially. Because the basis for his acts is substantial, we therefore have more assurance that the earlier worshippers of the true God also lived in the light of specific revelations from God. Hence we move on to our next chapter wherein we shall consider why Abraham tithed.

CHAPTER III

WHY DID ABRAHAM TITHE?

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WHY DID ABRAHAM TITHE?

Introduction

It seems to be a fair assumption that true believers prior to the time of Abraham worshipped God in the light of certain instructions which had been transmitted to them. The method by which they received those instructions may have been from their forebears, or directly from God through dreams, visions, or personal encounters with Him, but such information is not at our disposal today. Hence we are left largely to make an assumption concerning the basis for their acts. However, assumptions are not sufficient authority for considering the subject of the scriptural tithe, for we need, if possible, definite Scripture citations in order that we may have an authoritative basis upon which to build our understanding of the subject.

Apparently Abraham's religious life may be explained on the basis of conformity to the revealed will of God, for in Genesis 26:5 there is a statement which throws much light on his conduct. The statement of that Scripture is: "because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws." This verse has been largely overlooked by Bible students as to its meaning and implication in its relation to the life of Abraham. If it

will throw any further light upon our understanding of Abraham and his day, then a study of this passage is justified. Hence, we shall enter upon a careful analysis of it to discover its contribution to our understanding of Abraham.

Abrahamic Covenant Re-affirmed to Isaac

The context for this verse is in association with the life of Isaac. A famine, similar to one a century earlier in his father's experience, caused Isaac to leave the land of Canaan to sojourn in Gerar (v. 1) where Abraham had gone seventy or eighty years before. Jehovah, the God of the covenant and of the promise, appeared to Isaac and apparently turned him aside to Philistia rather than to permit him to go down to Egypt (v. 2). His father, under similar circumstances, had migrated to Egypt (Gen. 12:10), but apparently the Lord had given Abraham liberty to think and act for himself. On the other hand, Isaac was not given the same liberty of action and was instructed not to go to Egypt, for the Lord desired him to remain in the land (apparently Philistia according to v. 1).

A further purpose for the Lord's appearance to Isaac was "to renew to him the promises, temporal and spiritual, which had been ratified, by the divine oath to Abraham"¹ as revealed in verses 3 and 4. This promise of blessing is based upon the original covenant with Abraham, in Gen. 12: 2, 3, and the statement of Jehovah's oath in Gen. 22:16. The countries promised to him and his seed were Canaan and the

¹ Candlish, op. cit., p. 342.

surrounding lands which were occupied by the Canaanitish tribes mentioned in Gen. 15:19-21, while the blessing for the nations of the earth was found in Christ (cf. Gal. 3:16).

The nature of this Abrahamic Covenant should not be overlooked, for it is far from being legal in character and this fact should suggest that the so-called legal language of this verse could not be such in the final analysis. In the Old Testament there are a number of references to covenants of different sorts, but the two which stand out so prominently are the Abrahamic and the Mosaic. These two are the exact opposite of each other. In the various references to the Abrahamic Covenant (cf. Gen. 12:1-4; 13:14-17; 15: 1-7; etc.) it is clearly stated that Jehovah is the One who guarantees the fulfillment of the provisions, thus no obligation is imposed upon Abraham. In writing on the various forms of covenants in Israel's traditions, Mendenhall reminds us that it is God Himself who swears to carry out the Covenant in the future. He further comments that

It is not often enough seen that no obligations are imposed upon Abraham. "Circumcision is not originally an obligation, but a sign of the covenant, like the rainbow in Gen. 9. It serves to identify the recipient(s) of the covenant, as well as to give a concrete indication that a covenant exists. It is for the protection of the promisee, perhaps, like the mark on Cain of Gen. 4.¹

In noting the contrast between the Mosaic and Abrahamic Covenants, Mendenhall puts it this way: "[The Mosaic Covenant] imposes specific obligations upon the tribes or clans without

¹ George E. Mendenhall; "Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition," The Biblical Archaeologist, XVII, No. 3 (September, 1954), 62.

binding Yahweh to specific obligations, though it goes without saying that the covenant relationship itself presupposed the protection and support of Yahweh to Israel.”¹ Hence the Abrahamic Covenant is recognized as unconditional.

Thus Jehovah assured Isaac of the unqualified fulfillment of all the promises made to Abraham and his posterity on account of Abraham’s obedience of faith (vs. 3, 4).

The re-affirmation of these Abrahamic promises became God’s challenge to Isaac to live a life of faith similar to that of his father. Furthermore, it opened the way for a clear statement of the instructions upon which Abraham lived his life of faith. Calvin comments concerning this verse in these words:

Moses used these terms, that he might the more clearly show how seduously Abraham regulated his life according to the will of God alone – how carefully he abstained from all the impurities of the heathen – and how exactly he pursued the straight course of holiness, without turning aside to the right hand or to the left.²

In writing upon this verse, Leale says that “Abraham’s obedience was displayed in all the acts of his new life. . . .

This is that unreserved obedience which flows from a living faith, and withstands the temptations of the flesh.”³

Therefore, it is necessary that we undertake a careful analysis of Genesis 26:5 to determine its importance to

¹Ibid.

² John Calvin, Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis, trans. John King (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1948), II, 60.

³ T. H. Leale, Homiletical Commentary on the Book of Genesis, in The Preacher’s Complete Homiletical Commentary on the Old Testament, by various authors (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1892), p. 543.

the study of the tithe. Hence, we shall proceed to a careful analysis of the important words in that verse.

Genesis 26:5

The more one reads and considers this verse, the more its terminology reminds one of language which is commonly associated with the Mosaic Law. This realization is rather startling, for the verse in its very plain reading, literally interpreted, describes Abraham with terms which sound legalistic and yet it is known that Scripture reveals that he lived over four hundred years prior to the giving of the Law. Consequently, one may become puzzled at the use of such language to describe a man of "faith," but that fact cannot be denied. Keil calls attention to this condition in this way: "The piety of Abraham is described in words that indicate a perfect obedience to all the commands of God, and therefore, frequently recur among the legal expressions of a later date. שמר משמרת יהוה 'to take care of Jehovah's care', i.e. to observe Jehovah, His person, and His will."¹ Thus in considering these words, it will be necessary to note the connection between this language and the legal terminology of a later day.

In the English translation of this verse, it is of interest to observe that both the K. J. V. and the A. S. V. texts give identical wording, thus suggesting that probably there is no real problem in the translation of the verse into our language. This hint is borne out as being true since

¹ Keil, op. cit., p. 270.

the various writers make no change in this translation – it is an acceptable translation on the basis of the Hebrew text. In the immediately following paragraphs, we shall proceed to a careful analysis of the important words of the verse.

Abraham “Obeyed” Jehovah

It is obvious that when Scripture says “Abraham obeyed my voice,” it was implied that God had spoken in some way and at a given time or times so unmistakably that Abraham was consciously aware of certain instructions which expressed God’s will to and for him. This also describes Abraham’s character as one willing to follow the word of the Lord with the result that he merited the Lord’s unhesitating approbation and commendation – he was set up as an example for Isaac to follow (vs. 3-5). It should not be overlooked that this implication of ancient revelations from God is not a figment of the imagination, for the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews fully substantiates this when he says, “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets” (Heb. 1:1). Hence, ancient revelations prior to the time of Abraham must be acknowledged as a fact, for by this means we have a very adequate explanation for the lives of faith lived by such men as Abel, Noah, and others not even mentioned.

The word “obeyed”. – In the Hebrew text, this word is שָׁמַר which is the Qal perfect verb form. Since the Qal perfect always expresses completed action, it should be

thought of as expressing point action similar to that of the Greek aorist tense. Thus the Lord speaks of Abraham's life as a completed action which was characterized by obedience: he "obeyed" God. The original word means "to keep, watch, observe," as the commandments of God,¹ hence, it speaks of obeying, so that the Lord could properly describe Abraham's life by the declaration that he "obeyed."

The words "my voice". — The Hebrew form of this noun reveals nothing unusually significant, for the obvious meaning is clear to all. It is the usual word for "voice" קוֹל and simply indicates that God communicated with Abraham in some manner, whether by audible voice, or some other means is not indicated. Thus it is to be understood that Abraham received some kind of instruction from the Lord which he obeyed completely. In summing up this part of the verse, Whitelaw states that it means that Abraham "harkened to" Jehovah and that is simply "a general description of the patriarch's obedience, which the next clause particularizes."²

Abraham Kept Jehovah's "Charge"

The second clause in this verse is that Abraham "kept my charge" and it is as Whitelaw has stated, a particularization³ of the previous general statement that Abraham obeyed Jehovah's voice. Thus with this phrase the Lord points out what was included in the area in which Abraham

¹ B. Davidson, The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons Limited, 1956), p. DCCXXVI

² Whitelaw, op. cit., p. 324.

³Ibid.

obeyed the voice of Jehovah so there can be no misunderstanding the obedience of Abraham.

The word “kept”. – Here is another verb form from the same root word for “obeyed” which word we have already noted. This word is וַיִּשְׁמֹר which is comprised of waw consecutive with the Qal imperfect יִשְׁמֹר. Thus this expresses consequence in the sense of, “and so,” which then directs attention to how Abraham obeyed Jehovah’s voice. Therefore, the sense of the passage is, “that Abraham obeyed my voice and so he kept my charge” – the keeping of the charge is the consequence of obeying Jehovah’s voice.

The word “charge”. – This is a noun formed from the same root as the verbs, “obeyed” and “kept.” In the Hebrew text it is, מִשְׁמֶרֶת and it means “what is to be observed, a charge, law usage, rite.”¹ Thus it pertains to something to be watched, that is, something of a special duty, as when the priests were consecrated they were to remain at the door of the tabernacle for seven days and nights with the special responsibility to “keep the charge of the Lord, that ye die not” (Lev. 8:35). When Isaac blessed Jacob, “he gave him a charge” that he should not take a wife from among the Canaanites (Gen. 28:6) by which he obviously gave Jacob a command, an injunction or a requirement to keep and observe. Kalisch says it means “observed my ordinances.”² Thus it is obvious that the “charge” is that which is intended to be kept and

¹ Davidson, op. cit., p. DCCXXVIII.

² Quoted by Whitelaw, op. cit., p. 324.

Jehovah had indicated to Abraham something that was to be kept.

One further distinction to be noted in this word is that it is singular in number and not plural as are the three following nouns. In commenting with reference to this word, Keil points out that the word “is more closely defined by ‘commandments, statutes, laws, to denote constant obedience to all the revelations [sic] and instructions of God.”¹ Thus Keil is calling attention to the singular number of the word in contrast to the plural number of the three nouns as an indication that the “charge” includes the three and that they are an elaboration or enlargement of the content of the “charge.” In that way they more closely define the scope of the “charge.”

Inasmuch as these three nouns are so prominently used in this passage it should be noted that the Mosaic Law also distinguishes three areas of general law: moral, ceremonial, and judicial.² In describing their character, Driver further says:

The ceremonial torah is most prominent in the OT; but the judicial and moral torah was not less a reality, esp. in early times. Nor is it doubted by critics that this torah, under all its aspects, originated with Moses.³

These three sections of the Law are commonly understood by the scriptural terms commandments, statutes, and judgments.

¹ Keil, op. cit., p. 270.

² S. R. Driver, “Law (In Old Testament),” A Dictionary of the Bible, ed. James Hastings (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1906), III, 66.

³ Ibid.

In a number of instances the three terms are used in the same verse: Lev. 26:15; Deut. 5:31; 6:1; 7:11; 8:11; 11:1; and 26:15. Furthermore several of the verses read very similar to Gen. 26:5, for example: "Therefore thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and keep his charge, and his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments, alway" (Deut. 11:1).

In commenting concerning Deut. 11:1, Keil calls attention to the word "charge" by saying that the words "statutes," etc. "serve to explain the general notion, 'His charge.'"¹ Apparently this is the same idea as in Gen. 26:5. The three nouns are an elaboration or definition of the scope of the charge which Abraham kept and also that which Moses exhorted Israel to keep. Thus Keil makes a distinction in these terms. However, Driver maintains that throughout the Pentateuch these three nouns are used as general terms for law (תּוֹרָה) and that they are synonymous with "law."²

M. G. Kyle answers this view by showing that the terms commandments, statutes, and judgments are technical and are so used with reference to the three-fold character of the law. Kyle recognizes that there are some general terms for law, but concerning commandments, statutes, and judgments he writes,

In marked contrast to these general terms for law of any kind are certain words [these 3 nouns] which, by their

¹ Keil, op. cit., III, 345.

² Driver, loc. cit., pp. 66, 67.

definitive meanings, clear differentiation, and the exactly discriminating use made of them are shown to be technical terms. It will at once be perceived that this is a departure from the usual way in which the terms for law have been regarded by Pent scholars generally. . . . Sometimes the words which are now found to be technical are used interchangeable.¹

Furthermore Kyle declares “that there are no exceptions to the technical use of these terms except . . . that micwoth [commandments] has use frequently as a common term, when not used in connection with mishpatim [judgments] or hukkim [statutes].”² He also points out that wherever the regulations are said to be “commandments,” or “statutes,” or “judgments” only those kind of laws will be found there. He explains further that if the Scripture says “these are the ‘judgments’ and ‘commandments,’ or ‘statutes’ and ‘commandments,’ or the ‘judgments and statutes and commandments,’ then, in every case, just those kinds of laws mentioned, and all those kinds, and no other will be found in that list.”³

It is also to be noted that Kyle states that the technical use of the three nouns corresponds exactly with the three general divisions of the Law⁴ which Driver⁵ recognized. Therefore since these terms were used by Moses with a somewhat technical meaning, then the words in Gen. 26:5 written in the same general period of Moses’ life would have a similar technical sense when used together.

¹ M. G. Kyle, “Problem of Pentateuch, Supplement 1929,” The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, ed. James Orr (Chicago: The Howard-Severance Company, 1930), IV, 2312A, 2312B.

² Ibid., p. 2312B.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., p. 2312C

⁵ Driver, op. cit., p. 66.

Abraham Kept Jehovah's "Commandments"

At this point we note the use of the three nouns which are the usual designations for the three parts of the Mosaic Law or Covenant: commandments, statutes, and laws. When Nehemiah reestablished worship in Israel after the return from the Babylonian captivity, he reminded the Israelites that at Sinai Moses had given these things to them as the Covenant which God had made with them (Neh. 9:13, 14). Apparently the "precepts" of verse 14 are synonymous with the "commandments" of verse 13. Thus we find the same designations here as in the passage under consideration.

The word "commandments". — Here is the first of three plural nouns which comprise an elaboration of the content of the "charge" which Abraham kept so faithfully. This noun is מִצְוֹת, from the root, צוה, meaning "to set over, appoint; constitute, command, charge." Hence, the noun means "commandment, or precept"¹ and in the passage under consideration "my commandments" is a justifiable translation. As to what these "commandments" were, this passage does not indicate. However, since two other important words are used in this same verse, we are compelled to recognize that the Holy Spirit had certain distinctions in mind. Therefore, since the word is not clarified, we must look elsewhere for its meaning. According to Whitelaw, the word means "particular injunctions, [sic] specific enactments, express or occasional

¹ Davidson, op. cit., p. DCXLI.

orders”¹ and its use substantiates this explanation.

It is recorded of David that God said he “kept my commandments” (I Ki. 14:8). Obviously this says that David obeyed the will of God by keeping the Word of God as the “commandments” of God. Under the reformation led by King Josiah the “commandment” was made and executed “to offer burnt-offerings upon the altar of the Lord” (II Chron. 35:16). Thus there is a general use of the term whereby men as well as God may issue commands, precepts, or directions concerning things which are to be done, or to be avoided with reference to certain circumstances or situations. Throughout the Bible Jehovah has given many commands of various sorts — the earliest recorded is in connection with Adam when Jehovah “commanded the man, saying, of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat . . .” (Gen. 2:16, 17).

On the other hand there is the technical use of the term with reference to the God and man relationship whereby the “Decalogue” is commonly known as the “Ten Commandments.” In the structure of the Mosaic covenant, these Ten Commandments form the basis for Jehovah’s Covenant with the nation of Israel. In writing of the general and technical use of the word, “commandments,” Jacobs points out that God gave certain prescriptions or directions concerning particular matters in the ancient times when He spoke immediately to men but,

¹ Whitelaw, op. cit., p. 324.

in the Ten Commandments . . . they are reduced to a few all-comprehensive precepts of permanent validity, upon which every duty of man is based. Certain prescriptions of temporary force, as those of the ceremonial and forensic laws, are applications of these “Words” to transient circumstances, and, for the time for which they were enacted, demanded perfect and unconditional obedience.¹

Furthermore, Kyle in writing of the general and technical uses of this word says that technically it is used to denote the Ten Commandments. His statement is:

When used in connection with “judgments,” and “statutes” as titles for groups of laws it refers always to the Decalogue. When thus used as a title there is always found one or more of the “commandments” in that group of laws. As “judgments” correspond closely to our civil and criminal laws, and the “statutes” to our “statutes” concerning things not mala in se, and especially to ecclesiastical laws, so the “commandments” are fundamental law, as the Magna Charta of England or the Constitution of the United States.²

“Commandments” in relation to the Mosaic Law. — As the quotations from the two previous writers indicate, the technical use of the word “commandments” in association with “statutes” and “judgments” denotes the Decalogue which is the fundamental basis of the Mosaic Covenant. These ten commandments were thought of as the fundamental law of the state, therefore, they were engraved upon stone and deposited in the Ark (Deut. 10:2). However, when they were originally given they were proclaimed by Jehovah Himself in such a manner that all the people could hear (Ex. 20:1, 19, 22; Deut. 4:12, 33, 36) in order that the people might believe (Ex. 19:9).

¹ H. E. Jacobs, “Commandment,” The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, ed. James Orr (Chicago: The Howard-Severance Company, 1930), II, 679.

² Kyle, loc. cit., 2312B.

Furthermore, it should be noted that at the people's request, "the remaining laws, which are a practical application and interpretation of the ten commandments, were not spoken directly to them, but through Moses"¹ (Ex. 20:18-21).

Therefore, in view of the unusual circumstances under which the Decalogue was given, of necessity it would stand out prominently in the thinking of the Israelites and it is not to be wondered at that these regulations became known as the Ten Commandments. This title would be further encouraged since in the context in which they were given Jehovah used the word "commandments" (Ex. 20:6). Furthermore the Lord Jesus Christ upon a number of occasions called attention to the Ten Commandments as a distinct part of the Mosaic Law (Mt. 19:17; 23:35-40; Mk. 10:17-19).

It thus becomes apparent that when the word "Commandments" is used in Scripture, the most obvious meaning to be attached to it would be the "Ten Commandments" unless the context would reveal something else was intended. Therefore, when the word is used in Gen. 26:5 the first thought would be in terms of the Decalogue, but of course it also would be obvious that they could not be the Ten Commandments as we know them, for these were not given in association with Abraham's day.

At this point, it must be borne in mind that Moses was the human author of all of the Pentateuch and that he must be permitted to use his own vocabulary and not that of

¹ Davis, op. cit., p. 771.

another person. Since he in no way indicated any specific meaning of this word, it would seem that we are compelled to understand that he had certain ideas in mind which could be expressed only by the term which would be understood by his Jewish readers – to them “commandments,” unless otherwise defined, could refer only to something akin to their Ten Commandments. This view is further supported by the other two nouns which follow in this verse, for they are terms which also correspond to the terminology associated with the other two sections of the Mosaic Covenant.

Thus it seems reasonable to conclude that the word “commandments” could refer to a group of commandments in Abraham’s day, and possibly earlier, which were very much like the Ten Commandments, or possibly they were those precepts before codification by Moses. If this is the correct analysis, then it is recognized to be a sufficient explanation for Abraham’s life of obedience as an expression of his in God’s Word.

Abraham Kept Jehovah’s “Statutes”

The word “statutes”. – The word under consideration at this point is חֻקֵּי, a noun from the root חקק which means “to engrave, inscribe, portray.” Therefore, the noun means “statute,” or “law,” or as Whitelaw states, “statutes” are “permanent ordinances, such as the passover; literally, that which is graven on tables or monuments (compare Exod. xii. 14).”¹ Further clarification is given to the

¹ Whitelaw, op. cit., p. 324

technical meaning of this word by Kyle when he declares:

The Hebrew word means “directions,” from the throwing of the hand to guide one. Such exactly are the laws called “statutes;” they are directions about things not wrong in themselves, mala in se, but only so because of the statute, mala prohibita, not matter of controversy “one with another,” but matters of mere direction by the statute and usually, and indeed, especially in the functions of religion.¹

The administration of these statutes was properly placed in the hands of the priests since these laws pertained to religious affairs.² Among the pre-Mosaic religious practices, we list these: the religious use of pillars (Gen. 28:18); purification for sacrifice (Gen. 35:2, 3); tithing (Gen. 14:20; 28:22); circumcision (Gen. 17:10; Ex. 4:25ff.); inquiry at a sanctuary (Gen. 25:22); sacred feasts (Ex. 5:1); priests (Ex. 19:22); and sacred oaths (Gen. 14:22). The only satisfactory way to account for all of these pre-Mosaic religious practices is that there must have been instructions from the Lord, which have not been preserved for us in the Scripture.

“Statutes” in relation to the Mosaic Law.—One of the three-fold divisions of the Mosaic Law was known either as the “ordinances,” or “statutes.” This section of the Law provided for the government of the religious life of the nation through the priesthood, tabernacle, and order of the services (Ex. 25:1-40:38). It is of interest to note that even before Moses had been instructed concerning the Covenant,

¹ Kyle, op. cit., IV, 2312B.

²Ibid.

he told his father-in-law that he made the children of Israel to “know the statutes of God, and his laws” (Ex. 18:16). Hence, there were some religious instructions which as a nation they had received from Moses prior to the giving of the Law. The statutes under the Mosaic Law pertained to a number of things illustrative of which are, a perpetual statute not to eat fat or blood (Lev. 3:17); an everlasting statute required them to make atonement once a year for the sins of the nation (Lev. 16:34); and another perpetual statute provided that Aaron and his sons should eat the offering of shewbread (Lev. 21:22).

In the light of these considerations it seems that since Abraham kept Jehovah’s statutes, there were some kind of religious instructions which he followed. What they were, we cannot at this time say, for lack of further revelation in the Word of God has closed that door of information. However, it certainly is possible that God gave the pre-Mosaic people religious instructions and it is highly probable that he did so, as the use of the word, “statutes,” would indicate. Further, since it is recognized that priests were directly responsible for the administration of the statutes, then such easily can explain why Abraham recognized Melchizedek as the priest of the “most high God.” Although natural man corrupted through sin whatever the original statutes were, still it seems that we are compelled to admit that some men remained true to those statutes, of whom Abel, Noah, and Abraham are but outstanding examples. Their lives were characterized by “faith” as they observed God’s statutes in their religious

practice. Thus it is that Cain and Abel could know what kind of gifts to present before Jehovah; Noah likewise could know concerning the altar and burnt sacrifice; and Abraham could have instruction for the altar, the burnt sacrifice, and the tithe.

Abraham Kept Jehovah's "Laws"

This term is applicable to the third area of the three-fold division of the Mosaic Law and since it is used also of Abraham, we need to study it.

The word "laws", — The word "law" in the English versions usually is the rendering of the Hebrew word תּוֹרָה¹ which we shall consider. This is the last of the three outstanding nouns which are associated with Abraham's life of obedience to Jehovah. The noun form is תּוֹרָתִי from the Hiphil stem of the root יָרָה which means "to show, indicate, instruct, teach." Thus the noun gets the meaning, "instruction, doctrine; teaching, direction, precept, law." A good translation in view of the two nouns used in association with it in this context is that given in the English versions, "my laws."

Before Moses' time law, at least as custom, existed among the Israelites as seen in a number of allusions in both civil and ceremonial matters. However "we have no distinct account of such law, either as to its full content or

¹ Davis, op. cit., p. 443.

its enactment.”¹ Previously we have noted some of the religious customs which preceded the time of Moses, and the following are some of the civil customs of that same period: marriage customs (Gen. 16:4; 25:6; 29:16-30); birthright customs (Gen. 25:31-34); elders (Gen. 24:2; 50:7; Ex. 3:16); and homicide regulations (Gen. 9:6).

In writing further upon this subject, Rule states that “Law in the O T practically means the Law promulgated by Moses (having its roots no doubt in this earlier law or custom), with sundry modifications or additions, rules as to which have been inserted in the record of the Mosaic Law.”² Although this condition is true, yet it is apparent that the word “law” in connection with Abraham could not possibly be thought of even as similar to the Mosaic Law, for the other two significant nouns in the verse would preclude that possibility. But rather it would be more likely that the term “law” would have a more restricted sense to cover what the other two terms did not encompass in Abraham’s life, that is, the civil area in life which was not included in the other terms. This would be a part of human life that needed controlling principles even as it is true today among men. Hence, it is conceivable that God met the need in this manner.

“Laws” in relation to the Mosaic Law.—Under the Mosaic Covenant, the term which designates the third part of

¹ Ulric Z. Rule, “Law in the Old Testament,” International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, ed. James Orr (Chicago: The Howard-Severance Company, 1930), III, 1852.

²Ibid.

the Covenant is, *מִשְׁפָּטִים* which means “judgments.”

Literally it is “judging” and that means decisions of judges which have been fixed by precedent, approved of God, and written down among the laws of Israel.¹ In elucidating further, Kyle says the technical meaning is that

These are defined in the Heb. as laws “one with another,” things which were the Subject of controversy between two individuals or between an individual and the state. Thus the “judgments” were civil and criminal laws, usually concerning things wrong in themselves, *mala in se*, and were always subject to trial in the courts.²

Some, as Scofield does,³ consider the “judgments” as governing the social life of the people, but this is no different than Kyle has expressed it, for the social life would deal with the civil life in the final analysis. A demonstration of the character of these judgments is in Ex. 21:1-23:19.

Thus in view of the meaning of (1) the “judgments” under the Mosaic Law, (2) the meaning of the word “law,” and (3) the explanation of the “charge” by the three nouns, it seems that the meaning of “laws” is to be taken in the same sense as the “judgments.” By that means, then, we would understand that Abraham’s life was lived in conformity to a three-fold set of instructions which were somewhat similar to the later three-fold development of the general Mosaic Law. First there would be the moral “commandment” (*מִצְוָה*) from God in which he recognized (a) his proper relation to

¹ Kyle, *op. cit.*, IV, 2312B.

² *Ibid.*

³ Scofield, *op. cit.*, note #1, p. 95.

God in that he knew Him as “the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth” (Gen. 14:22); and (b) his moral obligation for personal life was expressed by the instruction to walk before God “and be thou perfect” (Gen. 17:1). The second area of instruction was the “statute (חֻקָּה) which gave guidance in religion. Abraham’s obedience here is seen in that he practiced circumcision (Gen. 17:10; 21:4, 23) and that he offered the sacrifice of Isaac (Gen. 22:2, 10). The third kind of instruction pertained to the “law” (תּוֹרָה) which dealt with judgments or moral instructions concerning civil life. He obediently followed the Lord’s command and left his home country to enter the land which the Lord had promised him (Gen. 12:1, 4; 13:17, 18).

Therefore in Genesis 26:5 Abraham’s obedience involved these three areas of life which compose the totality of man’s moral obligation. Each area was later expanded to form the more detailed definition of moral responsibility necessary to the life of a nation.

Conclusion

Now that we have analyzed this verse word by word, it has become apparent that here is ample justification for all that Abraham practiced in his daily living among men and before God. The only conclusion warranted by these things is that Abraham and the other believers of his day, and preceding it, had certain instructions by which God intended that they should guide their lives. This is the normal thing which could be expected from a God who does things orderly and who

desires of men that they, likewise, shall do all things decently and in order. In writing on the subject of Law and Grace, McClain very forcefully states it this way:

Thus whatever of good that has ever appeared in the Gentile world, Paul claims as a reflection (however faint) of the one original divine law recorded in Scripture. Now it is a fact that among the pagan Gentile nations, there is found occasionally a fairly high knowledge of morality – a reflection of the moral element which appears perfectly in the law written in Scripture. It is also a fact that the urge to offer sacrifice is universal, found among all nations – a reflection of the ceremonial law in Scripture. Finally, it is a fact that in the civil codes of various nations may be seen reflections of the written law of God (cf. the remarkable code of Hammurabi). All this points back to the unity of the divine law, both as to its content and its original source. In the one case it is written perfectly in Scripture. In the other it is written imperfectly in the hearts of men. There is one divine law.¹

It is recognized that there is no indication when these instructions were given, but that does not nullify the fact of their existence. Progressive revelation amply accounts for their promulgation and this cannot safely be denied. Whether they were written we cannot affirm, but it is evident that some, at least, were orally given from God to man as seen in the personal appearances of angels as God's messengers, and in theophanies. Dreams and visions also were used by God to communicate with man.

Thus the declaration and description of Abraham's tithing to Melchizedek is not totally unexpected nor startling; but rather we almost ought to be surprised if he did not do it, for tithing and proportionate giving were so widely

¹ Alva J. McClain, Law and the Christian Believer in Relation to the Doctrine of Grace (Winona Lake, Ind.: The Brethren Missionary Herald Company, Inc., 1954), pp. 29, 30.

practiced by the heathen. Their practices certainly require a common origin which antedates present records and this predicates the probability that Jehovah originally spoke His mind in these matters. The faithful followed His instructions, but the natural man corrupted them into heathen idolatrous practices. Nothing in Scripture contradicts this plausible explanation, but instead, everything in Scripture points in this direction and even requires it.

Here, then, is the only scriptural and sensible answer to the question, “why did Abraham tithe?” —He did it in conformity to divine instruction and in accord with his accustomed practice. Abraham observed the principle of the tithe because of its undoubted Divine origin which produced in his heart the desire to obey because of his “faith” in Jehovah. His heart of faith could express itself in no other way than to obey willingly and joyfully the complete will of God.

Thus Genesis 26:5 is seen to be a key verse in the Old Testament, as well as in the entire Bible, for here is a grace rule of life operating many centuries before the Mosaic Law.

CHAPTER IV

POST-ABRAHAMIC RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

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Now that the religious practices of men from the time of Adam's two eldest sons down through Abraham have been traced in connection with both believers and unbelievers, it is necessary also to see what men did after the time of Abraham. The account does not vary from the pattern previously established wherein men worshipped God with blood sacrifices offered on altars, and with their tithes in recognition of His lordship in their lives. The record of the heathen world is a continuation of idolatry and the various practices associated with it so that it will be unnecessary for us to recount any more details of their system of worship. But since we are developing the subject of the "Scriptural Tithe" it will be necessary to continue to trace it through the rest of Scripture. We shall note the religious practices of Abraham's son and grandson, Isaac and Jacob respectively, in their relation to the tithe especially, and then we shall close this chapter with a conclusion of Part I in which we shall sum up our findings thus far.

The Religious Practice of Isaac

There is nothing in detail, but there are a few experiences which Isaac had which reveal that he had more than

just a passing knowledge about Jehovah. He knew the Lord as a prayer answering God, for when he “intreated the Lord for his wife, because she was barren” (Gen. 25:21) he learned that Jehovah heard and answered prayer; for in due course of time the twins, Jacob and Esau, were born (Gen. 25:21b, 24). Thus he knew the Lord in a very personal way as one who could be approached directly by the suppliant. Upon the occasion when a famine was in the land “the Lord appeared unto him” (Gen. 26:2, 3) and instructed him not to go down to Egypt, but to remain in the land and the Lord’s blessing would be upon him. This personal appearance of the Lord to individual believers was a familiar method by which the Lord dealt with his people from the days of Adam. So he had the joy of meeting the Lord in such intimate personal fellowship.

Furthermore, Isaac knew the necessity of erecting an altar for a place of worship, for at Beer-sheba the Lord reaffirmed His promise to bless him, and as a result Isaac built an altar there (Gen. 26:24, 25). The word for altar, *מִזְבֵּחַ*, is the same word that is used of the altars erected by Noah and Abraham and thus it describes an altar used for the offering of blood sacrifices. Hence, it is natural to think that Isaac followed both the precept and the practice of his father Abraham. This is the first instance of Isaac building an altar, for it may be that those altars erected by his father still remained in the other places where he had sojourned, thus making it unnecessary to do his

own building.¹ But we discover that he was ready to meet the Lord at an altar when the need arose. His act apparently conformed to the practice of the long but thin line of believers who offered sacrifices based upon what must have been very early instructions from the Lord. Such practice would date from as far back as Noah, at least.

Although Isaac was faithful in the practice of sacrifices, still we find no statement or clue that he also practiced tithing. Thus he makes no contribution to our understanding of tithing; however, it seems inconceivable that he did not follow his father in that manner of worshipping Jehovah, also. Doubtless he was acquainted with it as an institution observed by both believers and heathen; but why no record is left concerning his attitude toward tithing we cannot say. However, it seems probable that he practiced it in view of his son's action. Undoubtedly Isaac taught Jacob even as Abraham taught Isaac.

The Religious Practices of Jacob

Whereas the record of Isaac's religious experiences included the experience of knowing God as a prayer answering God, the experience of having the Lord appear unto him personally, and the experience of worshipping God at an altar of sacrifice, it lacked the experience of the tithe. In contrast the record of Jacob's experience is fuller, for we are told that he not only knew God personally and worshipped at altars of sacrifice, but that he also worshipped in giving

¹ Whitelaw, op. cit., p. 331.

the tithe to the Lord. We shall examine Jacob's experiences more closely and especially that of the tithe.

Jacob's Non-Tithing Experiences

In this area of Jacob's religious life, he had varied experiences which we shall mention without elaboration, for they do not further our study of the tithe, except to show that he had some blessed experiences with the Lord and that he was used of the Lord in the Lord's service. Thus it could be said that he tithed to show something of his appreciation to the Lord for the many blessings of which he had been the recipient — at least that was true of his Bethel experience (but we shall note this experience more fully as we consider his tithe).

In keeping with Noah, Abraham, and Isaac, he knew what it meant to build an altar for sacrifice; for the same word for "altar" is used of his experiences as of theirs (cf. Gen. 33:20; 35:1, 7). Furthermore as he set out upon the journey to Egypt to be with Joseph he offered blood sacrifices "unto the God of his father Isaac" (Gen. 46:1). Thus he worshipped the true God with the proper sacrifices as did Noah, Abraham, and Isaac before him. Jacob also was permitted the privilege of having God speak to him in a vision (Gen. 46:2), he blessed Joseph's sons (Gen. 48:9, 14-20), and he uttered the Messianic prophecy concerning Judah (Gen. 49:8-12). Thus it is apparent that Jacob had many religious experiences which were of a non-tithing nature, but which marked him as one interested in the things of the Lord in

spite of his many failures.

Jacob's Tithing Experience

This is the second complete record of tithing in the Scriptures and it reveals how Jacob incorporated tithing into a business vow at Bethel (Gen. 28:20-22). Apparently the Lord was pleased with this vow, for years later he reminded Jacob of it and instructed him to return home (Gen. 31:13) after He had abundantly blessed him. Many have misunderstood this vow and have thought that Jacob bargained with God, thus failing to see the exercise of Jacob's faith. Properly to understand this event it is necessary to examine it in the light of chapters 27 and 28.

In chapter 27 is the story of what commonly is called the stolen blessing when Jacob schemed through the counsel of his mother to secure the blessing which Isaac planned to bestow upon Esau. It resulted in Jacob incurring the hatred of Esau and his intent to kill Jacob after the death of their father (v. 41). When Rebekah learned of this intent, she advised Jacob to go to visit her brother Laban in Haran, until Esau's temper abated (vs. 43-45). Without advising Isaac of this reason for sending Jacob to Laban's home, she induced Isaac to send Jacob there to seek a wife. Isaac accepted the suggestion, blessed him, and sent him on his journey (Gen. 28:1-5). As he journeyed, Jacob stopped overnight near to a city called Luz (v. 19) and that night the Lord spoke to him through a dream.

Jacob's dream (Gen. 28:13-15).— As he dreamed of a

ladder reaching to heaven, Jehovah spoke to him and revealed Himself as the “Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac” (v. 13). Then He confirmed to Jacob all of the three-fold promises which the fathers had received: the land, a large posterity, and a blessing to the whole earth (vs. 13, 14). Not only did the Lord confirm these earlier promises, but He also promised him protection on his journey and a safe return to his home (v. 15). Since the fulfillment of these promises was a great way off, the Lord added a word of assurance: “I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of” (v. 15). In the light of these promises it should be noted that Jehovah initiated this whole program and His promise was without any reservation or any spoken demand — it was of Grace and not of Law.

Jacob recognized Jehovah’s presence (Gen. 28:16-19). —

Upon awaking, Jacob exclaimed: “Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not” (v. 16). Maclaren takes this to mean that Jacob had not known previously of the omnipresence of God, but had just learned the lesson and it startled him.¹ But one wonders if this is the correct understanding in view of the renewing of the covenant and the unconditional promises with which the Lord accompanied it. Does it not give expression to his astonishment at discovering that the condescending mercy of the Lord should be near to him when he is so far away from home? Candlish states it in these words which seem

¹ Maclaren, op. cit., p. 212.

to explain the reaction more naturally: “favoured in such circumstances with such a vision, and receiving so gracious a renewal of the covenant, Jacob might well awake with a vivid sense of the divine presence.”¹ A similar view is expressed by Keil:

The revelation was intended not only to stamp the blessing, with which Isaac had dismissed him from his home, with the seal of divine approval, but also to impress upon Jacob’s mind the fact, that although Jehovah would be near to protect and guide him even in a foreign land, the land of promise was the holy ground on which the God of his fathers would set up the covenant of His grace. On his departure from the land, he was to carry with him a sacred awe of the gracious presence of Jehovah there.²

No wonder it is said that Jacob was “afraid,” and exclaimed “how dreadful is this place!” (v. 17). But others were afraid at similar discoveries of God’s presence: the people at the giving of the Law (Ex. 20:18, 19); Isaiah (Isa. 6:5); and Peter (Lk. 5:8). The phrase “how dreadful is this place” simply expressed “how awe-inspiring”³ it all was. In spite of his alarm Jacob called the place “the house of God, and . . . the gate of heaven” (v. 17) thus indicating that it was a place where God dwelt and a way that opened to Jehovah in heaven.⁴ It is no wonder, then, that when he wakened in the morning, he performed a solemn act of dedication in which he turned his stony pillow into a sacred memorial and he called the place Bethel (Vs. 17, 18). But he also performed a solemn acknowledgment of obligation

¹ Candlish, *op. cit.*, p. 364.

² Keil, *op. cit.*, p. 282.

³ Whitelaw, *op. cit.*, p. 350.

⁴ Keil, *op. cit.*, p. 282.

by making a vow (vs. 20-22). Thus the presence and promise of Jehovah overwhelmed Jacob.

Jacob vowed to tithe (Gen. 28:20-22). — To some readers the language of these verses seems to indicate doubt and a disposition on the part of Jacob to bargain or make terms with God, rather than to express faith and an acquiescence in the terms of blessing already stated by God to him. But this is hardly the case. The seeming condition expressed by the words “if God will be with me” etc. (v. 20) is not necessarily the expression of contingency or suspense, for the particle “if” often has the sense of “since,” or “forasmuch as.” In writing concerning the use of אִם , Gesenius says:

the fundamental rule is that אִם is used if the condition be regarded as already fulfilled, or if it, together with its consequence, be thought of as possibly (or probably) occurring in the present or future. In the former case אִם is followed by the perfect, in the latter . . . by the imperfect or its equivalent . . .¹

It should be noted that all of the verbs which follow אִם in verses 20 and 21 are perfect while the verbs in verse 22 are imperfect. Thus, “since” or “forasmuch as” may be the proper meaning of “if” in this passage, and such is the case in other Old Testament references of which the following are illustrative: Gen. 47:18; Job 14:5; 22:20; and Ezek. 35:6. In the New Testament “if” also has the sense of “since,” or “forasmuch as,” in such passages as: Rom. 8:17; Gal. 4:7; Col. 2:20; and 3:1.

Furthermore, when the Lord’s promise in verse 15 is

¹ E. Kautzsch (ed.), Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar, trans. A. E. Cowley (2nd. English ed., Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1910), pp. 494, 495.

compared with Jacob's recital of it in verse 20, it is evident that Jacob does not consider the blessing to be uncertain, but he is saying "if it be so," or in other words "since it is so" that "God will be with me."¹ This is in reality the language of faith, not that of skepticism! As Candlish puts it:

Can it be? Is this, in truth, his communication to me? Then, if so — that being the case — however beyond all expectation and all belief such goodness manifested to such an one as I am may be — I hesitate, I doubt no more. I take thee, O Lord, at thy word. And as thou givest thyself in covenant to thy servant, so in the bonds of the same covenant I venture to give myself to thee!²

This certainly seems to be the better interpretation. When the events of these two chapters are remembered as the background for his decision.

Thus Jacob's reaction is but the natural sequel to everything that has transpired. He is not showing forth a mercenary or doubtful spirit, but he is expressing his gratitude for God's mercy; it is his soul's full and free acceptance of the Lord as his God; it is Jacob appropriating and anticipating, by faith, the complete fulfillment of Jehovah's promises.³ Therefore, he is simply recognizing, beforehand, his obligation and duty and pledging himself to accomplish it. So the question which confronts him is how to express his gratitude; what would be a suitable acknowledgment under the circumstances? His decision was that Jehovah should be his God (v. 21) and in token of Jehovah's faithfulness to him

¹ Candlish, *op. cit.*, p. 366; Whitelaw, *op. cit.*, p. 351.

² Candlish, *op. cit.*, p. 366.

³ Whitelaw, *op. cit.*, p. 351.

rather than of his own loyalty and love to God he would set up the stone pillar as God's house and of all that the Lord would give to him he in turn would give back to the Lord a tithe of it (v. 22).

Therefore, Jacob's act is the response of faith to the Lord's promises. A hastily constructed altar was erected and for lack of other sacrifice that he could call his own, he poured oil upon the stone – thus the essence of this was not ceremonial, but spiritual. Meanwhile, between his present acceptance before the Lord and the complete fulfillment of the Lord's promises, Jacob cast himself upon the providence of his God and whatever the amount of the Lord's liberality he offered a pledge of a tithe of it all as proof that he recognized the Lord as the giver of everything. Thus his tithe was evidence that he recognized the whole was from God and for God.

Now the question is, why did Jacob select the tithe as a sign that he knew the Lord to be the Giver and why did he own the lordship of God? The answer seems to be quite obvious if it is remembered that Jacob was the grandson of Abraham and that it is probable that Abraham lived until the boyhood of Jacob.¹ Thus Abraham could have given instruction in his faith to Jacob, or if not that, then undoubtedly Isaac had received such teaching and in turn had taught Jacob. In either case, Jacob would have been brought up in the true

¹ Isaac was 60 yrs. old when Jacob was born (Gen. 25: 26) while Abraham was 160 yrs. old and lived to be 175 yrs. of age (Gen. 25:7, 8).

faith. Then at Bethel God confirmed to Jacob and all his posterity the promises which He had made to Abraham. Consequently, nothing could be more natural for Jacob than to react in conformity with his religious teachings so that he, too, willingly promised a tithe of the material possessions which the Lord had promised to him. Lansdell states it thus:

What, then, could be more natural than that Jacob should avow himself ready to practice Abraham's religious observances? He promises to take the God of Abraham for his own God, to dedicate a certain place to His worship as did Abraham, and also to follow his grandfather's practice in dedicating to God a tenth of all he should receive.¹

It should be noted also that whereas it is not specifically indicated that Abraham's tithing was a life-time practice, yet it is manifest that Jacob's intent was for the extent of his life and not simply intended for the one occasion or for the journey immediately ahead of him. A second difference from Abraham's tithe is that no part of Jacob's tithe was designated for a priest. Probably by this time Melchizedek had died, and there is no record of a successor; however, that does not necessarily mean there were no true priests. The point is simply that no priest was specified in Jacob's experience as there was in Abraham's. We are only noting the fact as far as the record goes and nowhere is it indicated that God's claim is remitted or abated. However, Jacob's tithing is presented as an act of homage to

¹ Lansdell, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

God and a recognition of his lordship. Therefore, the case of Jacob is one more proof that the practice of voluntary tithing was known and observed by believers antecedent to the time of Moses.

Conclusion for Part I

Now that tithing prior to the Mosaic Law has been analyzed it is necessary to review our thinking in the light of the apparent facts and the resulting implications so that we may formulate a justifiable and reasonable conclusion. As a necessary background it was essential to note carefully the religious practices of both the followers of the true God and of the heathen; however, it did not serve our purpose to analyze the heathen customs as carefully as those of the believers in Jehovah. A close parallel has been noted between the two in the exercise of their respective faiths. Among other things, it has been observed that both groups included in their procedures altars, blood sacrifices, priests, circumcision, and proportionate giving. Furthermore, it was seen that the Scripture designated only the tithe wherever it named a proportion, whereas the heathen practiced various proportions but usually they emphasized the tithe.

It has been recognized that the Lord did not state all of his word and will at one time; hence the principle of progressive revelation has been observed operation in bringing to light the worship of the true believers. Hence, it was needful that we follow the scriptural account in a

chronological order of the examples of the religious practices to learn which of them, if any, involved tithing or even suggested the possibility of it. Therefore, the plain statements have been studied together with the implications which could be properly formulated from them.

Cain and Abel were the first examples and it was seen that they presented offerings to Jehovah which seemingly were taken out of the natural increase of their flocks and of the fruit of the ground. The recognition of sin is not stated as the reason why they felt the need to make the offerings, and the Hebrew work for "offering" is not that which expresses the idea of "slaughter for sacrifice," for it is the word which means "gift, tribute, or offering." Furthermore, these "gifts" were made, probably at the end of the harvest, as suggested by the time phrase "in process of time." Hence, it seems better to consider these offerings as gifts expressing appreciation to the Lord for the abundant harvest rather than sacrifices for sin. Such gifts intimate proportionate giving since that is the kind of giving recognized both in Scripture and in the world. If it was proportionate giving, the amount is not stated, but since the only scriptural proportion is the tithe, therefore, there is a possibility that "gifts" were based on the tithe.

Furthermore, their actions to be acceptable before the Lord presuppose some kind of instruction as a guide. This is substantiated by the declaration that Abel gave his gift on the basis of faith since faith requires a previous statement that may be believed. Therefore, it seems fair to

consider that Cain and Abel had instructions for the presentation of their gifts and that since the only scriptural proportionate giving is the tithe, it is a strong possibility that was the kind of gift which the Lord instructed them to give. Since it seems to be apparent that these were not blood sacrifices, then they must be in the classification of gifts which show appreciation for the Lord's kindness and grace.

The second example was Noah of whom it is declared that he erected an altar upon which he offered a burnt-sacrifice. The word for "sacrifice" means a blood sacrifice and therefore it is not the same word as the offerings of Cain and Abel. But no mention is made of Noah presenting gifts of the type given by Cain and Abel. Whether he ever gave such gifts we cannot say, for all that is recorded is his altar with its burnt sacrifices. Noah's action also required previous instruction so that what he did would meet with God's approval. Thus because of previous instruction we have the explanation for the gifts of Cain and Abel and the sacrifice of Noah. This also is ample explanation for the heathen practices of sacrifices and gifts, for their universality points to a common origin along with that of true believers, but which customs have been corrupted by the heathen. Thus the two approaches in the worship of God are seen in Scripture (sacrifices and gifts) and also in a corrupted form they are found in the heathen religions. Undoubtedly all have a common origin in God's original instructions.

The experience of Abraham combines there two approaches

in the area of the worship of God, for he worshipped God with both burnt-offerings and tithes. Among the religious practices which Abraham observed were altars, burnt offerings, circumcision, and tithes. Furthermore it is said of both Abraham and Melchizedek that they served the “most high God the founder of the heaven and the earth” as Jehovah the true God. When Abraham tithed to Melchizedek as God’s priest, he thereby recognized Melchizedek as the divinely ordained mediator and priest of the most high God. There must be some explanation why he knew to tithe. That assumption is verified as a true assumption, for it is declared that “Abraham obeyed my voice, kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws” (Gen. 26:5). Here, then, is confirmation for Abraham’s religious practices which undoubtedly included tithing. Moreover this statement also makes it very probable that Cain, Abel, and Noah acted on the basis of specific instructions from God, thus lending support to the proposition that there was an original revelation for all men.

Isaac also worshipped God, as did Noah, with altar sacrifices, but with no mention of the tithe. However, his son Jacob worshipped the Lord with various religious practices including sacrifices and the tithe. It is very probable that Abraham taught Isaac, and Isaac taught Jacob so that it seems to be a reasonable assumption that Isaac also tithed although the record does not declare that he did.

Thus the sum of the evidence is that God apparently gave certain religious instructions to man at least as early

as the time of Cain and Abel, and very probably to Adam. The entire content of those directions is not fully known today, but nevertheless it must be assumed that God's instructions formed the basis of all true worship of Jehovah, for otherwise man could not know how to please Him. Even the heathen practices must find their origin in these original provisions even though they have been corrupted long ago.

These directions from the Lord very easily account for the two characteristics of both true and corrupted religion, i.e. sacrifices and proportionate giving. In the area of giving Scripture teaches only the tithe, and the heathen practiced it almost entirely. Therefore, in accord with this view Abel gave an acceptable proportion which, if it was the tithe, must be presumed to have been taught throughout the centuries to Noah, and from him on through Abraham to Jacob. When it is claimed that no mention of the tithe is found prior to Abraham, it should be remembered that tithing was practiced by the heathen long before Abraham's time. Therefore, on the basis of an original revelation from God it seems right to assume that believers from the beginning probably were instructed in tithing. Especially does this seem to be substantiated since the heathen already were practicing it long before the day of Abraham. The over whelming probability that the tithe was the original proportion established by God seems to make it necessary to believe that tithing has existed and continued from the beginning. Hence, in these two ancient practices, sacrifices and tithes, lie

the foundation for the Mosaic provision for sacrifices and tithes. In our next section we shall be concerned with the Mosaic tithes.

PART II

TITHING UNDER THE MOSAIC LAW

CHAPTER V

THE THREE MOSAIC TITHES

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THE THREE MOSAIC TITHE

Introduction

In our study of the chronological development of the scriptural tithe we now are at the point where it is necessary to consider tithing under the Mosaic legal system. It has been noted that previous to this point there are only two specific instances of tithing recorded in the Bible, but it also has been seen that the custom of giving a tenth part of the products of the land and of the spoils of war to priests was a very ancient practice among practically all nations. This was so true that tithing is considered to have been practically universal in its observance by the ancient people.

That the Jews had the custom long before the Mosaic Law is demonstrated by the examples of Abraham and Jacob (Gen. 14:20; 28:22.). Their practice parallels what secular history reveals concerning the custom of tithing among the ancient heathen peoples even many centuries prior to the act of Abraham. Thus it would seem logical to argue that there must have been an original instruction which enjoined this practice. Furthermore, it would have to be assumed that God gave the original revelation, but exactly when it was given or what the instruction was, neither the secular records nor

the biblical statements demonstrate. Although it seems necessary to assume that God gave the original regulation, it should be noted that nothing in Genesis conflicts with this idea. On the contrary, examples like Cain and Abel and Noah seem to confirm the proposition. Especially does the explanation of Abraham's action (Gen. 26:5) support it so that the assumption is highly probable.

Previously it has been observed that the two specific examples of scriptural tithing (Abraham and Jacob) give no intimation that their acts were performed on a basis of legality as required by the Mosaic Law even though there is abundant testimony that what they did was in conformity to the will of Jehovah. It is well to mark this point carefully, for the Law provided that violators should be chastised (cf. Lev. 26:14-46), but in the pre-Mosaic days no such provision was even intimated.

No proof is needed that under the Mosaic system tithing was expected, for a number of passages expressly state it and no one can successfully deny it. As this practice is considered in connection with the Law, it is seen not "as a new institution, but as regulated and adapted to a new form of government on which was based the Jewish polity."¹ When the Law was established, the customary altars, sacrifices, and tithing were not abolished, but they simply became regulated and codified expressly for the children of Israel when they became settled in the land of Canaan (Ex. 19:3). Israel had

¹ Landsdell, op.cit., p.56.

been accustomed to the practice of these things, but not under such a legal system – this was something new to them. In the last three chapters of Leviticus it is shown clearly that tithing was a part of the Law given at Mt. Sinai as God spoke to the children of Israel through the mouth of Moses (Lev. 25:1, 2a; 27:30; 32, 34). Thus the ancient practice of tithing is seen as having been continued and made a vital part of the Mosaic legal system.

The record prior to the Law speaks only of the practice of tithing without even suggesting that there might be more than one tithe. But when the Scriptures are read carefully, it is clear that the Law established more than one. Not everyone is agreed as to how many there were, for some think there were two while others hold there were three. Josephus lends his support to the view that three tithes were observed in Israel: (1) the tithes which the Levites' received annually from the people and which they in turn tithed to the priests¹ (this is often called the Levites' tithe); (2) the festival tithe which apparently was annual and which was used at the feasts and celebrations in Jerusalem;² and (3) the poor tithe which was given every third year for those in want, such as widows and orphans.³ The statements of the old Testament seem to be clear enough as to furnish a solid

¹ Flavius Josephus, The Life and Works of Flavius Josephus, Trans. William Whiston (Philadelphia: The John C. Winston Company, n.d.), book IV, ch. IV, #4, p. 119.

² Ibid., book IV, ch. VIII, #8, p. 131.

³ Ibid., book IV, ch. VIII, #22, p. 133.

basis for the view of Josephus and many others that every third year Israel actually gave three tithes. A consideration of those tithes will now be undertaken.

The Levites' Tithe

The Pentateuch provides the scriptural basis for tithing under the Mosaic legal system and indicates the conditions under which it is to be observed. The first or basic tithe is that which frequently is known as the Levites' tithe because it was given for the support of the Levites, or sometimes it is called Jehovah's tithe because it was given to Him through the Levites. A characteristic passage describing this tithe is found in Leviticus:

And all the tithes of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's: it is holy unto the Lord. And if a man will at all redeem ought of his tithes, he shall add thereto the fifth part thereof. And concerning the tithe of the herd, or of the flock, even of whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the Lord. He shall not search whether it be good or bad, neither shall he change it: and if he change it at all, then both it and the change thereof shall be holy; it shall not be redeemed. These are the commandments, which the Lord commanded Moses for the children of Israel in Mount Sinai (Lev. 27:30-34).

Thus it is seen that this passage indicates certain characteristics of the tithe. Herein is declared that all Israel was under this requirement since the Lord had included these instructions as part of what He had given Moses at Mt. Sinai for the children of Israel (v. 34). Keil and Delitzsch state it this way: "the laws contained in this chapter are brought to a close in ver. 34 with a new concluding formula (see chap.xxvi. 46), by which they are attached to the law

given at Sinai.”¹ Thus it had a restricted use and practice for those only who were under the Law and which therefore did not include the Gentiles. The source of the tithe was to be of the seed of the land, the fruits of the tree (v.30), and of the flock of the pasture (v. 32); thus apparently all of the natural increase was to be tithed. The procedure for tithing the flock is outlined as “whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the Lord” (v. 32). This is understood to mean that as the herds and flocks passed out to pasture they were counted and every tenth animal was reckoned as holy to the Lord.² The rabbins explain that every year the additions to the flock and herd were counted and a tithe taken from them, not from the whole herd or flock. Thus the tithe was something well known to the Jew and needed no great amount of explanation.³ Furthermore, the owner was not permitted to select the tithe by choosing the good or bad, and neither could he change it, or else both the chosen animal and the one changed would be holy unto the Lord and could not be redeemed (v. 33). But the seed of the ground and the fruit of the tree could be redeemed by adding a fifth part to it (v. 31). The Lord was the recipient of the tithe since it was reckoned as “holy unto the Lord” (v. 30).

In Num. 18:21-32 it is laid down that this tithe must

¹ Keil and Delitzsch, Pentateuch, II, 486.

² Paul Levertoff, “Tithe,” The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, edited by James Orr (Chicago: The Howard-Severance Company, 1930), V, 2987.

³ Keil and Delitzsch, Pentateuch, II, 486.

be paid to the Levites: “behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel” (v. 21), because they had no other earthly inheritance and this was their return for their service in the tabernacle (vs. 21, 24). Thus this provision would indicate that the people were to bring the tithe to the place of worship (the Tabernacle, or later the Temple). The source of the tithe was to be the corn of the threshing-floor and the fulness of the wine press (v.27) which coincides with the seed of the land and the fruit of the trees in Lev. 27:30. Even as the people tithed to the Levites so were the Levites to tithe to the Priests from the tithes which they had received from the people (vs. 26-28). Whereas the people were not free to select their tithes the Levites, on the other hand, were specifically instructed to choose the best from what they had received (v. 30).

Thus concerning this tithe, it should be noted that no produce of the land or increase of the flock was excepted and that the offerer had no voice in the disposal of it, for it was the Lord's. Since it was the Lord's He had designated it for His servants in the Tabernacle service because they had no inheritance in the land. Thus the tithe became their perpetual means of support. Even though it was considered a heave offering (Num. 18:24), the offerer received none of it back, and the amount of this tithe could not be diminished. Neither did he have the choice whether or not he would give, for there was a divine claim upon it which made it to be dishonesty if any were withheld in any way (cf. Mal. 3:8).

In view of these considerations, it is of value to

note that there is a distinction between tithes and taxes. Unfortunately some people think that the tithe took care of both tithes and taxes, but that was not so, for Scripture distinctly distinguishes between them. In Ex. 30:15 16 a tax of one-half shekel was exacted of the rich and poor alike without regard for the income of either. The prophet Samuel warned that Saul as king would demand one-tenth of their seed and flocks in addition to the order levies (I Sam. 8:14-17). Furthermore, it should be noted that the people became tax conscious and under Rehoboam they pleaded for lighter taxes (I Ki. 12:4). At the same time that we read of these tax problems nothing is said which would cancel for the Jew his required payment of the tithes while he was expected to pay his taxes. The government levied and received taxes and at the same time the Lord through the Levites received their tithes. Thus it is seen that taxes and tithes were not identical – one did not offset the other – for the Jews continued to pay tithes and taxes, when perhaps at times it was as much as one-half of their income.¹

In the light of these facts it is recognised that this tithe which the Israelites gave could be called either the Levites' tithe, or Jehovah's tithe since it was for the support of the Levites in their service of the Lord. It is at this point that we begin to note the similarities between the tithing of Abraham and Israel under the Law. As the Israelites tithed through the Levites to the high priest and

¹ Simpson, This World's Goods, pp. 93, 94.

through him to Jehovah, so we have noted that Abraham gave tithes to the Lord through Melchizedek, priest of the most high God in his day. Both Israel and Abraham exercised their tithing in the light of the instructions which they had. As far as tithing concerned the Law did not institute some new principle, but it gave certain specific instructions concerning this ancient practice as Jehovah desired to have it applied to His chosen people, Israel. Thus an ancient practice became a part of the codified Law. Keil and Delitzsch point out these things in the following way:

In the laws published hitherto, it is true that no mention has been made of it; but, like the burnt-offering meat-offerings, and peace-offerings, it formed from time immemorial an essential part of the worship of God; so that not only did Jacob vow that he would tithe for the Lord all that he should give him in a foreign land (Gen. xxviii. 22), but Abraham gave a tenth of his booty to Melchizedek, the priest (Gen. xiv. 20). Under these circumstances, it was really unnecessary to enjoin upon the Israelites for the first time the offering of tithe to Jehovah. All that was required was to incorporate this in the covenant legislation and bring it into harmony with the spirit of the law.¹

It is to be observed further that both tithes were given out of the increase of worldly goods: Abraham out of the spoils of war; and the Israelites out of the increase of their crops and flocks. The points of dissimilarity between these two experiences of tithing serve to emphasize the points of similarity, i.e., they gave to Jehovah through His priests and they tithed out of the increase of their possessions.

¹ Keil and Delitzsch, Pentateuch, II, 486.

The Festive Tithe

Whether this tithe is separate from the one which we have just considered probably never will be satisfactorily settled and probably the view which holds this to be the second tithe out of three practiced in Israel also never will be conclusively determined. But as the subject is pursued through the Old Testament the descriptions of tithing seem to require at least two tithes, if not three. The passage which is considered to teach this second tithe is, Deut. 14: 22-27, which is as follows:

Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of my seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year. And thou shalt eat before that Lord thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds, and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the Lord thy God always. And if the way be too long for thee, so that thou art not able to carry it; or if the place be too far from thee, which the Lord thy God shall choose to set his name there, when the Lord thy God hath blessed thee; then shalt thou turn it into money, and bind up the money in thine hand, and shalt go unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose: And thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lustest after, for oxen, or for strong drink, or for whatsoever thy soul desireth: and thou shalt rejoice, thou, and thine household, and the Levite that is within thy gates: thou shalt not forsake him; for he hath no part nor inheritance with thee (Deut. 14:22-27).

Some of the various provisions of this tithe seem to set it apart as a distinct second tithe while others are similar to what is called the Levites' tithe. This tithe is similar to the first in that the crops and increase of the flocks and herds are required to be tithed annually (vs. 22, 23). Also they were to be taken to the Lord's appointed place (v. 23). Wherein this tithe is different from the first begins to come to light when it is observed that it is not

reserved only for the Levites, but the offerer and his family were to partake of it as well as the Levites (vs. 26, 27). When this passage is compared with Deut., chapter 12, it is seen that the giving of tithes is connected with the observing of sacrificial meals at the Lord's sanctuary (Deut. 12: 5-7). However, the gifts from which these meals were prepared are not particularized here, but according to Keil and Delitzsch they were "supposed to be already known either from the earlier laws or from tradition."¹ In the preceding books of the Pentateuch nothing has been said about the appropriation of any portion of tithes for sacrificial meals, but in Deuteronomy it is simply assumed as the customary thing and not introduced as a new commandment.² They were instructed not to eat the tithe within their gates, that is in the towns of the land (Deut. 12:17), but only in the Lord's sanctuary (Deut. 12 18).

Furthermore, if the distance was too great for the whole of the tithe to be transported to the place appointed of the Lord, then they were to sell the tithe and purchase at the sanctuary whatever they needed for the sacrificial meals (Deut. 14:24, 25). Thus it seems that sacrificial meals were associated with the presentation of the tithes to which was applied a tenth part of the corn and oil "as well as the flesh of the first-born of the edible cattle."³ This was

¹ Keil and Delitzsch, Pentateuch, III, 356.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

known as the second tithe, or the Festive tithe, “which is mentioned here for the first time, but not introduced as a new rule or an appendix to the former laws. It is rather taken for granted as a custom founded upon tradition, and brought into harmony with the law relating to the oneness of the sanctuary and worship.”¹

Thus, since the first tithe was designated for the Levites because they had no inheritance in the land, and the tithe in Deuteronomy was associated with sacrificial feasts which included the offerer’s family and the Levites as participants, it is quite apparent that these are different tithes. The object of this second tithe was that Israel might rejoice with holy reverence in the presence of her God and worship Him (Deut. 14:23, 26). Thus by means of this tithe they came to worship Jehovah at the feasts and the food for the family was supplied. In concluding our consideration of this tithe it should be noted that prior to the time of Moses there is no hint of this tithe in Scripture, but the first, or the Levites’ tithe, is seen as early as Abraham’s day. Thus it is seen that this tithe met a specific need in the plans and purposes of God for Israel and when it had served its purpose, it ceased with the doing away of the Old Testament feasts.

The Poor Tithe

In close association with the passage which describes

¹Ibid.

the Festive tithe is, Deut. 14:28, 29, which is often spoken of as the Poor Tithe, or a third tithe. Josephus is one of the outstanding writers who speak of it as a tithe which was given every third year for widows, and orphans, and those who were in want. His statement is:

Beside those two tithes, which I have already said you are to pay every year, the one for the Levites, the other for the festivals, you are to bring every third year a third tithe to be distributed to those that want; to women also that are widows, and to children that are orphans.¹

Many of the commentators, whether right or wrong, are of the opposite view, which is that the so-called third tithe is merely the second tithe applied in a different way, Keil and Delitzsch express their view: "consequently this tithe cannot properly be called the 'third tithe,' as it is by many of the Rabbins, but rather the 'poor tithe,' as it was simply in the way of applying it that it differed from the 'second' . . ."² A similar view is expressed by Driver: "every third year, however, the tithe is not to be consumed at the central sanctuary, but to be stored up in the Israelites' native place, as a charitable fund for the relief of the landless and the destitute."³ Again this same idea is stated by Alexander in these words: "this was not an additional tithe

¹ Josephus, *op. cit.*, book IV, ch. VIII, #22, p. 133.

² Keil and Delitzsch, *Pentateuch*, III, 368, 369.

³ S. R. Driver, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy*, in *The International Critical Commentary*, ed. Charles Augustus Briggs, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Alfred Plummer (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1895), p. 166.

but the former differently applied.”¹

The scriptural statement that is involved is:

At the end of three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase the same year, and shalt lay it up within thy gates: and the Levite, (because he hath no part now inheritance with thee) and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest (Deut. 14:28, 29).

It is quite obvious that this passage is declaring that certain people who were in need were to be assisted by this tithe which was to be given every third year. Driver states that the tithe is not only to be “brought forth” every three years, but that “the verb may suggest the collateral idea of its being brought forth publicly . . . and ‘deposited’ – perhaps in some public storehouse – in his native city.”² This idea certainly seems to be in keeping with the statement of verse 28, for the intent was to relieve those who were in need of help, the widow, the orphan, and the stranger. Hence, this tithe was not spent in joy and gladness as was the second tithe (v. 26), but merely for the relief and comfort of the poor and unfortunate who otherwise might be forced to beg. Hence, this tithe stands in contrast to the second tithe in its intended use.

Furthermore, if this were merely the second tithe applied in a different way, then every third year the people

¹ W. L. Alexander, Deuteronomy, vol. 3, The Pulpit Commentary, ed. H. D. M. Spence and Joseph S. Exell (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950), p. 238.

² Driver, op. cit., p. 167.

would not be able to have the joy of participation in the festivities of the feasts and they would miss that spiritual benefit which came annually in the other two years.

Therefore, it seems best to understand this is a third tithe given every three years for the express purpose of providing means to alleviate the suffering of the poor, and thus quite appropriately it is designated the “poor tithe.” As an encouragement to carry out these instructions, the blessing of God is promised those who follow this observance (v. 29).

The Climax of the Tithes

One other obligation developed upon those who completed the third, or Poor Tithe as stated in Deut. 26:12-15. This became the climax of the entire tithing program wherein the faithful tither went before the Lord in prayer and stated that he had fulfilled his obligations, thus he would be in a position to receive the Lord’s approval and blessing. The statement of the first two verses of the passage is:

When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithes of thine increase the third year, which is the year of tithing, and hast given it unto the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat within thy gates, and be filled; then thou shalt say before the Lord thy God, I have brought away the hallowed thing out of mine house, and also have given them unto the Levite, and unto the stranger, to the fatherless, and to the widow, according to all thy commandments which thou hast commanded me: I have not transgressed thy commandments, neither have I forgotten them (Deut. 26:12, 13).

The time when this instruction was to be observed was stated to be in the third year when they had “made an end of tithing all the tithes” of their increase (v. 12). The phrase, “the third year,” would identify this as associated

with the third, or Poor tithe, but its connection is by virtue of the fact that when they had completed the tithes then they were to make the confession of verse 13. Thus “on the occasion of presenting the tithes, a special service was also to be made.”¹ This would be very appropriate since in the third year the worshipper would have presented: the Levites’ tithe for the support of the Levites and priests; the Festive tithe would have been used at the Feasts; and the Poor tithe would have been given for the relief of those who were in need. Certainly these acts are sufficient to explain the statement, “when thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithes of thine increase the third year, which is the year of tithing” (v. 12). Patrick states that the Jews called this the “consummation or finishing of tithing”²

A further word of explanation is added by Waller when he says the time “according to Jewish usage, was the Passover-eve of the fourth year” which would be “the first feast after the completion of the year of tithing.”³ Since there still would be some untithed fruit to be gathered even after the Feast of Tabernacles, Waller declares that “the tithe of the third year must be separated to the very last item before the Passover of the fourth”⁴ year. But we would doubt if his

¹ Alexander, op. cit., p. 406.

² Simon Patrick, Genesis - Joshua, vol. I, A Critical Commentary (Philadelphia: Frederick Scofield & Co., 1877), p. 869.

³ C. H. Waller, Deuteronomy to II Samuel, vol. II, A Bible Commentary for English Readers, ed. Charles John Ellicott (London: Cassell and Company, Limited, n.d.), p. 69.

⁴Ibid.

identification of the Passover eve is correct, for verse 13 indicates that the offerer simply went into the Lord's presence to make his declaration that he had obeyed all of the Lord's instructions.

Keil and Delitzsch point out that "saying before the Lord" (v. 13) "does not denote prayer in the sanctuary (at the tabernacle), but, as in Gen. xxvii. 7, simply prayer before God the Omnipresent One, who is enthroned in heaven (ver. 15), and blesses His people from above from His holy habitation."¹ In explaining the phrase, "say before the Lord," Alexander also recognizes that it does not necessarily imply the sanctuary as the place where the prayer was offered and so he states that the Israelite might make his prayer in his own home.² The declaration before the Lord that the offerer had fulfilled the commands of God (v. 13) refers primarily to the directions concerning the tithes; therefore, it is not a claim to self-righteousness. But it is a "solemn profession of attention to duties which might have been neglected, and refers, not to the keeping of every commandment, but to the having faithfully done all that the Law required in respect of tithes."³

This prayer closes very fittingly when the people are instructed to ask for the Lord's blessing upon Israel, because they have performed their duty. It would have been presumption

¹ Keil and Delitzsch, Pentateuch, III, 427.

² Alexander, op. cit., p. 406.

³Ibid.

on their part to have asked for the blessing if they had not acknowledged the Lord as the donor of all the good things they enjoyed, for that was the real end of all oblations, first-fruits, and tithes. "As thou swarest unto our fathers" (v.15) expresses God's attempt to teach them to conclude as they began (v. 3) with thankful acknowledgement of God's faithfulness to His promise.

The Tithe in Israel's Experience

In the history of Israel the tithe has had an important place, for its practice or lack of practice has been vitally associated with the blessing of the nation, or with its chastisement. At times the nation followed measurably well the keeping of the tithing obligations, but as they departed from the faith so tithing became corrupted.

When Hezekiah came to the throne of Judah (II Chron. 28:27) he came into a kingdom which had been corrupted by his wicked father, King Ahaz, who had looted the Temple and turned the whole land over to idolatry. Hezekiah preferred to follow the Lord rather than the footsteps of his wicked father; therefore; it is said of him that "he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David his father had done" (II Chron. 29:2). One of his first acts was to open and repair the doors of the Lord's house (II chron. 29:3) and to call upon the Levites and priests to sanctify themselves, cleanse the temple, abolish idolatry, restore the sacrifices, and keep the Passover (II Chron. 29-31). It is well to note that the reform included

the restoration of the tithe for the Levites (II Chron. 31:5, 6, 11, 12) to carry on the Temple worship. Thus there was the recognition of the first tithe which was a basic part of the Law and which was the same principle as Abraham's tithe – a gift to the Lord through His priests. The reform brought the blessings of the Lord and the people prospered.

A second experience was when Nehemiah led a company of Israelites from Babylonia back to the land (Neh. 2:5-9). He rebuilt the wall of the city (Neh. 2:17; 6:15) and with the assistance of Ezra under whom the temple had been rebuilt (Ezra 3:8; 6:15) he reestablished the worship services (Neh. 8:1 ff.). Here again the tithe for the Levites was reinstated as Hezekiah had done (Neh. 10:37, 38) with certain Levites appointed over the tithes (Neh. 12:44) and a great chamber was prepared to receive them (Neh. 13:5, 12). Thus it was that the tithe for the Levites was given recognition and reestablished in the land in the post-captivity period. Once more the close connection between the tithe and Israel's spiritual condition has been noted – when the people desired to obey the Word of God the tithe took its rightful place in their religious life.

The third experience was when Malachi ministered and wrote in the midst of a spiritual depression of the nation of Israel. Slowly the nation had drifted from God until in his day they offered as sacrifices the blind, lame, and sick of their flocks and herds (Mal. 1:8). They had neglected worship in the Lord's house until the Lord was so disgusted with them that He wished someone would close the doors (1:10). Their

neglect of worship caused them to say, “what a weariness is it” (Mal. 1:13a). Now the time had come when they were to prepare for the coming of the Messiah (Mal. 3:1), and so the appeal went out for them to return to God (3:7). Malachi states that this return to the Lord was to begin in the very practical manner of bringing the tithes and offerings to the Lord (3:7, 10). He makes the very sweeping condemnation that they were robbing God in that they had not been giving Him their tithes (3:8, 9).

Therefore, he challenges them to bring their tithes into the storehouse with a promise of great blessing (3:10, 11). They were called upon to bring “all the tithes,” or the “whole” of the tithe and not merely a portion, for the tithe was paid to Jehovah for His servants (Num. 18:24). At least after the time of the later kings, the tithes were brought to the sanctuary where store-chambers had been built for that purpose (cf. II Chron. 21:11; Neh. 10:38, 39).¹ “That there may be meat in mine house” refers to the food and the supplying of the needs of the Levites in conformity with the first tithe of the Law.² In this passage it is declared that tithing will produce such blessings from God that they would not have room enough in which to store them. Thus we see once more the importance of the Levites’ tithe and how that it was emphasized so strongly. It was a vital part of the religious

¹ Carl Friedrich Keil, The Minor Prophets, vol. II, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament, trans. James Martin (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951), p. 464.

² W. J. Deane, Malachi, in Amos-Malachi, vol. 14, The Pulpit Commentary, ed. H. D. M. Spence and Joseph S. Exell (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950), p. 41.

life of the nation of Israel whenever they were in the right spiritual relation to the Lord.

Summary

We have considered all of the Old testament passages which deal with the tithe in relation to the nation Israel and although there is no agreement among biblical scholars concerning the number of tithes which Israel was called upon to practice, it has seemed well within the realm of Scripture to consider that there were three specific tithes. The first, which we have called the Levites' tithe, was an annual tithe levied upon all of the increase from the ground, and the flocks, and herds of the entire nation. This tithe was specified as belonging to the Lord, and became His because it was given to the Levites for their support since they had no inheritance in Israel as had been provided for the other tribes. Therefore, inasmuch as this tithe was provided for those who were in the service of Jehovah as His representatives to the people, so it was like the tithe which Abraham gave to Melchizedek, God's priest and representative in that day. Both recognized the lordship of Jehovah and that all of their abundance had come from Him.

Furthermore, this same principle of tithing was practiced by Jacob who probably was taught by his father Isaac (although it is not so declared but still it is what was to be expected under the circumstances) and it is even possible that his grandfather, Abraham, may have taught him since it is quite probable that Abraham lived for about fifteen years after the birth of Jacob. But somehow Jacob knew tithing

was acceptable to the Lord. Thus we have the progenitors of the Hebrew nation practicing the tithe which also became a vital principle of the Law system. It was not something new, but it was a principle which became codified for the guidance of Israel after they had come out of Egypt. Here, then, is a basic principle which antedates the giving of the Mosaic Covenant and which God chose to incorporate into the legal system of the nation Israel.

To this basic tithe there were added two other tithes, the Festive tithe, and the Poor tithe to be used for specific purposes. The Festive tithe was to be observed annually and eaten by the family of the offerer and the Levites upon the joyous occasions of the annual feasts in Jerusalem. Thus the offerers partook of the benefits of this tithe in a physical way which was in direct contrast to the first tithe which benefitted only the Levites. Therefore, it may be observed that this tithe did not necessarily place a great burden upon the people since it provided sustenance for both the offerer and the Levites while they were at the feasts.

The third, or Poor tithe was given every third year for the benefit of the Levites, strangers, widows, and fatherless. It was not presented in the Temple, but was gathered in each city to be used for the benefit of those who were in need. Hence, it was not the second tithe put to a different use, but a separate tithe, for had it been the second put to a different use, then the people could not have participated in the joyous feasts every third year. Therefore, this tithe served a specific purpose over and above the other two by

making provision for the needy in Israel and also the stranger in her midst. Furthermore, it should be noted that there is no scriptural record of the second and third tithes prior to the Mosaic Law. Hence, it seems reasonable to consider them as distinctly Mosaic and as belonging only to the legal system. In other words, it seems that they were added to the basic tithing principle for use under the Law to meet the special and peculiar situations which would arise under that economy; and when the need should pass, these special provisions likewise no longer would be needed.

The climax to the presentation of these three tithes came when the offerer went into the presence of God, not in Jerusalem, but at home, to pray for His blessing because all of these tithes had been so faithfully practiced.

The last thing which was noted in this chapter was that the Levites' tithe was quickly restored whenever a reform was instituted in Israel, as under Hezekiah, and when Nehemiah rebuilt Jerusalem in the post-captivity period. The other tithes probably were restored also, since they were part of Jehovah's instructions to Israel, but no specific statement has been found that effect. Therefore, it is seen that the emphasis was placed upon the Levites' tithe, or in other words, the basic tithe. This also is strongly suggested by Malachi's challenge that Israel should bring the "whole" of the tithes into the storehouse that "meat" may be provided in His house. Apparently he referred to the Levites' tithe, for store-rooms were provided for such tithes that the needs of the Levites should be provided according to the purpose

of the first tithe.

Thus it has been seen that the Law emphasized the basic tithe for the support of the Lord's servants and that the tithing principle may be traced in Scripture as far back as Abraham's time, at least. Thus from the very beginning of their race, the Jews have known of the tithing principle. The father of the Jewish race practiced it because of Jehovah's instructions which antedated the Law, and the Jews as a nation practiced it because it was a vital part of the Mosaic Covenant. Thus Abraham tithed on a grace basis, while the nation of Israel did it on a legal basis. Therefore, it cannot be successfully maintained that the tithing principle began with the Mosaic system.

CHAPTER VI

THE NON-TITHE OFFERINGS

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THE NON-TITHE OFFERINGS

When the Israelites finished giving their tithes for a year, that was not the fullest extent to which they could make offerings, for there were many other ways in which they could make gifts or offer sacrifices. Hence the possibility of exceeding the tithes was great. After Moses had received from the Lord the plans for the Tabernacle, he took a freewill offering from the people to provide the necessary materials and funds for the structure (Ex. 35:5, 6). The response of the people was tremendous and every need was abundantly met, so that finally Moses had to restrain the people from giving more (Ex. 35:22; 36:6, 7). From such similar opportunities which were presented to Israel to give, it is seen how generously they went beyond their tithes. Thus we shall note only briefly their miscellaneous contributions and their sacrifices, for such matters affect the subject of the tithe only in an indirect manner.

Miscellaneous Contributions

Among the miscellaneous contributions there were certain fixed claims imposed upon the people which were given both annually and occasionally, and also there were certain free-will offerings which could be given as they chose.

Fixed Claims

At this point we shall note some of these claims as illustrative of how the Israelite had responsibilities beyond the three tithes. At harvest-time the owner was not to glean the fields, orchards, or vineyards, but to leave that privilege for the needy and stranger (Lev. 19:9, 10; Deut, 24:19-22). Thus he contributed beyond the Poor tithe. The first-fruits were another annual claim against the faithful Jew.

The amount is not stated, but the requirement is enjoined (Ex. 22:29). An occasional charge was the offering of the first-born of both man and beast (Ex. 13:1; 22:29, 30). When the Lord instructed Moses in the wilderness to take the census of those twenty years old and above, it was required that each should pay one-half shekel apiece whether rich or poor (Ex. 30:11-14). The fruit for the first three years from a tree was to be regarded as unclean, while in the fourth year the fruit was to be set apart as praise to the Lord (Lev. 19:23, 24). Finally a unique requirement was that every seventh year the creditor was to refrain from demanding repayment of that which he had loaned (Deut. 15:1, 2, 9). Such were the fixed miscellaneous contributions which the Jew made in one way or another either annually or occasionally beyond the tithes. The Lord's blessing was his for performing these duties and it was sin to withhold such contributions.

Free-Will Offerings

In this category the Israelite was to make a freewill offering at the time of keeping the feast of weeks, but

the nature and amount of this offering is not stated (Deut. 16:10, 11). Frequent mention of both vows and free-will offerings is made in the Law in the same context and it is of interest to note that an imperfect bullock or lamb might be brought for the free-will offering, but not for the vow (Lev. 22:21, 23). Annually at the feast of unleavened bread, the feast of weeks, and the feast of tabernacles all the males were to appear before the Lord and give as they were able (Deut. 16:16, 17). A general rule concerning vows was that a free-will offering should be made in keeping the vow exactly as it had been made (Deut. 23:21-23). Finally, the Israelite was to help a brother who was poor and in need, for by that means he would receive the Lord's blessing upon all his work (Deut. 15:7, 8, 10).

Therefore, by these various fixed claims, and freewill offerings it is evident that a faithful Israelite really was generous with his substance. Sacrificial offerings comprise the last area of the non-tithe gifts which we need to consider.

The Sacrificial Offerings

In considering these offerings at this point it is recognized that they do not directly contribute to the understanding of the tithe, but they do comprise gifts which are a part of the Mosaic covenant, and yet are not part of the tithes. They further demonstrate something of the giving nature of the religion of Israel. Furthermore, in these sacrifices is seen the continuation of the principle of sacrifice

which we have traced from as early as Noah's day and which also paralleled the tithe from as early as Abraham's time. The two principles of tithing and sacrificial offerings are thus very ancient in their practice and are seen to have been incorporated into the Law for the special use of Israel. We shall now consider briefly the sacrificial offerings.

The Burnt-Offering

This was the first of the three sweet-savour offerings (Lev. 1:3,9) and it was made by sacrificing either a bullock, sheep, goat, turtle-dove, or pigeon. The blood was sprinkled round about the altar and the entire carcass was consumed upon the altar. The burnt-offering typified "Christ offering Himself without spot to God in delight to do His Father's will even in death,"¹ and the laying on of the offerer's hands signified that he identified himself with his offering.

The Meal Offering

In the King James Version this offering is called the "meat offering" (Lev. 2:1), but it is more properly known as the "meal offering" because it was composed of "fine flour." Sometimes it was an independent offering and upon other occasions it was given in connection with the burnt-offering. Typically the meal offering spoke of Christ in all of His evenness and balance of character in which no quality was in

¹ Scofield, op. cit., p. 126, note #1.

excess neither was any lacking.¹ This was the second sweet savour offering.

The Peace Offering

In the peace offering (Lev. 3:1) the believer was shown to be in right relation to God by expressing the good fellowship between them. Three kinds of peace offerings are distinguished: the thank offering in recognition of unmerited blessings, the votive offering in payment of a vow, and a free-will offering expressive of love for God.² This offering permitted the use of any animal authorized for sacrifice, but no bird could be offered. All of this is typical of the whole work of Christ in relation to the believer's peace with God, for in Him the believer and God meet in peace.³ This was the third sweet-savour offering.

The Sin Offering

This is the first of the two non-sweet savour offerings, and as a sin offering (Lev. 4:3) it speaks of the guilt of sin through ignorance (v. 1). Thus this offering was made for sins the effect of which terminates primarily in the offerer.⁴ For this offering a bullock, a male or female goat, a female lamb, a dove, or a pigeon was used. Typically it shows Christ laden with the believer's sins, thus expressing

¹*Ibid.*, p. 127, note.#3.

² Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 551.

³ Scofield, *op. cit.*, p. 128, note #4.

⁴ Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 551.

the idea that He has been “made sin for us” (II Cor. 5:21).¹

The Trespass Offering

In the trespass offering (Lev. 5:6) the wrong has been done largely to another, thus it is sin the effects of which terminate largely in another and for which restitution must be made as well as the offering of a sacrifice. A ram was prescribed for this sacrifice, or in the case of the leper and the Nazarite, a male lamb was required. As another non-sweet savour offering it is typical of Christ atoning for the injury of sin.²

The Drink Offering

The drink offering, the wave offering, and the heave offering are used in connection with the various sacrifices. In the case of the drink offering, it must accompany the set feasts as, the first-fruits (Lev. 23:13), the wave loaves (Lev. 23:18), and the feast of tabernacles (Lev. 23:37). It was excluded from the sin and trespass offerings.

The Wave Offering

The wave offerings were parts of the peace offerings and must be brought from the peace offerings by the offerer himself (Lev. 7:30, 34). In performing the rite the priest laid the matter to be waved upon the hands of the offerer and probably placed his hands under those of the offerer and

¹ Scofield, op. cit., p. 129, note #1.

²Ibid., p. 131, note #1.

moved them.¹

The Heave Offering

The heave offerings were other parts of the peace offerings and refer particularly [sic] to that which was raised up, lifted up, or separated unto the service of Jehvoah [sic] (Lev. 7:14). In general these offerings were from the most holy things, the portions of the meal offerings, sin offerings, and guilt offerings which were not required to be burned on the altar.² These were assigned to the priest and his family for food provided they were ceremonially clean (Num. 18:11).

In this brief sketch of the non-tithe offerings and sacrifices it has become crystal clear that tithing was not the only means by which the Jews gave of their means in obedience to the Divine instructions in the Law. Much more was entailed in the various sacrifices and offerings which were either required or voluntary so that it is manifest the Law made it necessary that a Jew be generous if he was going to practice his religion faithfully. Thus it is obvious that the Tabernacle provision gave a large place to the presentation and to the use to be made of sacrifices and offerings.

It should be noted that Hezekiah restored the offerings as well as the tithes (II Chron. 31:10, 12) when he instituted the reform in Israel. Moreover the place of offerings was further emphasized by Malachi when he accused the nation of robbing God of both tithes and offerings (Mal. 3:8).

¹ Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 807.

²*Ibid.*, p. 294.

Now that we have seen giving as provided for under the Law, it is necessary to summarize the development of the scriptural tithe as it is found in the Old Testament.

Summary For Part II

This part of our subject has been concerned with the practice of the tithe by the nation of Israel as required by the Mosaic Law. Three tithes were identified as God's program for Israel, although some students identify only one tithe and others find only two. However, our subject is not appreciably affected by the number of tithes so much as it is necessary to establish the fact of the tithe. Therefore, since none deny that the tithing principle was an integral part of the legal requirements under the Mosaic economy no extended discussion was necessary. Hence, it was noted that since the first, or the Levites' tithe was given to the Levites as Jehovah's [sic] representatives, it was therefore, similar to the tithe which Abraham gave to Melchizedek as Jehovah's priest. Thus such a tithe was not a new principle with the nation Israel, but one with which they had been acquainted for many centuries.

A parallel for the second and third tithes was not found in the scriptural record prior to the era of Moses. Thus, the second, or festive tithe, and the third, or poor tithe were seen to be distinctively Mosaic and hence additions for Israel's special observance under the Law. Therefore, it was observed that the basic tithe principle began at least as far back as Abraham and that in the Law two other tithes were superimposed upon it for Israel's observance.

The importance of the tithe was further emphasized by noting that when Hezekiah reestablished the Law under his reform movement, he clearly restored the first, or the basic, or the Levites' tithe, but the other two tithes were not so identified although it seems unlikely that he omitted them. The point is that the record leaves no doubt concerning the reestablishment of the first tithe. Likewise, when Nehemiah, in the post-captivity period, reestablished worship in the Temple, he also restored the Levites' tithe, but the other two tithes are not mentioned. It is probable that they also were begun again, but the record mentions the restoration of the first tithe only. Furthermore, Malachi speaks of "tithes" without designating how many, but since he speaks of them as providing "meat" in God's house, that strongly suggests the first tithe, for it was used to provide food for the Levites. The other two tithes possibly were included, but the immediate context does not necessarily imply them.

As we turned to consider the non-tithe offerings and sacrifices it was discovered that only the principle of sacrifice antedated Moses' time. Previous to his day burnt sacrifices were offered as far back as Noah's time, but the many other offerings of the Law were not identified until the giving of the Law. Hence, as far as the record is concerned the many offerings associated with the Law belong to Israel, except the principle of the burnt offering which antedated the Law.

These things are significant, for the Apostle Paul has told us that the Law was only temporary until Christ should

come (Gal. 3:19). Therefore, that being the case, the things which are distinctly Mosaic no longer operate, but those which were not distinctly Mosaic would not be necessarily affected. Hence, since the Law was only temporary, the two additional tithes would be only temporary, and likewise the many offerings would be only temporary. But the basic principle of the tithe for the Lord's servants would not necessarily be affected and neither would the principle of sacrifice be necessarily abrogated by the passing of the Law.

Therefore, it is to be observed that Moses added two other tithes to the basic law, and many offerings to the principle of sacrifice. Moreover, all of these additions were distinctly included in Jehovah's instructions for Israel. Hence, with the passing of the Law for righteousness they are no longer obligatory, but their passing need not necessarily affect the ancient principles of the tithe and of the sacrifice. In the passing of the Law it is recognized that the great general principles of the Law were permanent and that they are restated in the present dispensation. However those features which were distinctly temporary passed away with the coming of Christ. Rule puts it this way:

The great general principles of the Law were not transitory but abiding, and reappear under the gospel dispensation. Otherwise, however, i.e. in those particulars, whether ceremonial or civil, in which it was adapted to merely passing needs, the Law passed away when Christ came.¹

Thus as a rule of life for believers the Law has passed away,

¹ Rule, *loc. cit.*, p. 1857.

but on the other hand it is recognized that those who, today, place themselves under the Law are responsible to keep it in its every detail. However, it is just as impossible for anyone to keep the Law in our day as it was during the dispensation of the Law.

In the light of these considerations we are ready to examine the New Testament to discover how these basic principles are related to it, and especially the tithe.

PART III

TITHING AFTER THE MOSAIC LAW

CHAPTER VII

THE NEW TESTAMENT TITHE

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THE NEW TESTAMENT TITHE

Introduction

Now that the tithe has been traced through the Old Testament it is necessary that our attention be turned toward the New Testament. There are a very limited number of passages where the words "tithe," "tithes," or "tenth" are used in the New Testament with reference to our subject of the scriptural tithe. Therefore, we shall consider all of them to discover what contribution they make to this New Testament phase of our subject. Furthermore, since sacrifices and offerings were seen to be closely associated with tithing throughout the Old Testament, it will be necessary to consider briefly whether those teachings are to be found also in the New Testament in connection with tithing. Since this paper is not concerned primarily with those two subjects, they can be dealt with only in a secondary sense.

Since there is much unresolved discussion by Bible scholars on the subject of New Testament tithing, it will be necessary to examine each passage carefully to form the basis for a final conclusion. As this chapter is begun, it is recognized that the first part of the study easily could have been included in the previous section pertaining to the tithe under the Mosaic Law, because the church had not yet begun and these

verses had their setting immediately prior to the Cross of Calvary. Therefore, technically they can be considered to be under the Law, but since the passages are found in the New Testament Gospels, it has seemed well to consider them under the chapter heading of "The New Testament Tithe." Thus they really conclude the Old Testament teaching of the Mosaic tithe by revealing Christ's recorded teaching on the subject and also by revealing somewhat the attitude toward the subject in His day.

Tithe In The Gospels

There are only three passages to be noted here, and they are: Mt. 23:23; Lk. 11:42; and Lk. 18:21. The first two give the only record of Christ's personal teaching on the tithe while the third reference gives just a glimpse into the practice of some of the Jews upon the subject. We shall now give our attention to the passages.

Christ's Teaching On The Tithe

It should not be overlooked that the two Scripture passages which need to be considered are found in the two Gospel records of Matthew and Luke; hence, they are teachings given by the Lord before His death upon the Cross. Therefore, it is seen that the teaching was given while the Law still was in force and Pentecost had not yet ushered in the era of the church. Thus it is of interest to note how His teaching related itself to the Mosaic Covenant.

He supported the tithe (Mt. 23:23). — What little we have of Christ's teaching on the tithe is given in relation

to His rebuke of the Pharisees. Upon a number of occasions he rebuked them, but it should be noted that although he denounced them upon several grounds yet he never criticized them for their tithing. He plainly rebuked them for not obeying the command to honor their father and mother. However when they quoted a tradition which permitted them to escape from this duty by claiming their money was "Corban," or a gift to God (Mk. 7:11), Christ pointed out that they had made void the Word of God by reducing that which was an obligation to that which was of free will. He showed that their heart attitude was wrong.¹ Such teachings the Lord called error, and He warned His disciples to beware of such leaven of the Pharisees (Mt. 16:16). But in the midst of the passage where He pronounced repeated woes upon the Pharisees He commended them for tithing, yet He rebuked them for having omitted some more important things pertaining to the Law in these words:

Woe the unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone (Mt. 23:23).

Thus it is seen that although the Lord had rebuked them very severely for other things, yet He expressed His approval of their tithing when He said, "these ought ye to have done." This same attitude is given in a similar passage in Lk. 11:42. These two passages, then, certainly reveal the Lord's approval, hence His recorded teaching on the tithe. Although these are

¹ Cf. Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah (New American Edition; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1942), II, 212, 412, 413.

the only statements on this subject which we have from the Lord there should be no difficulty because they are so few in number, for if He had declared Himself only once on this subject, that would be all that would be needed.

The third and final passage in which the Lord refers to the tithe is in the parable which He taught of the Publican and Pharisee who went into the temple to pray (Lk. 18:10-14). It should be noted that although the Pharisee was condemned by the Lord, yet he was approved for his tithing. His condemnation lay in that he trusted in his own righteousness and in his contempt for others: "I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. I tell you this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (vs. 12, 14).

One further observation should be made concerning Christ's support of the tithe. Whereas Christ's enemies accused Him of having violated the Sabbath, they never so accused Him of not having tithed. Although this is an argument from silence which is a difficult type of argument to use, it does seem quite significant that if the Lord had failed to tithe, His enemies surely would have pounced upon that failure in a hurry. Therefore, this failure on their part to make any such accusation certainly suggests that the Lord was not at fault in this respect and that we could expect He would practice what He had approved in the Pharisees. Thus it is not only possible that the Lord tithed, but it is highly probable in view of His attitude toward the Law which will be noted in

the next paragraph.

His attitude toward the Law.— This may be succinctly summed up by our Lord's own statement: "think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill" (Mt. 5:17). It is seen that His whole life was lived in harmony with this declaration when it is remembered (1) that He was reared under the Law and His parents faithfully attended the various feasts and performed the various requirements of that Law; and (2) in His own ministry when a lawyer asked, "what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Lk. 15:25), His answer was, "what is written in the law?" how readest thou?" (v. 26).

At the beginning of His ministry, when John hesitated about baptizing One whom he knew to be greater than himself, Jesus answered, "suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness" (Mt. 3:15). Throughout His ministry our Lord continually upheld the Law, as when He had healed the leper, He told him to show himself "to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded" (Mt. 8:4). Furthermore, upon another occasion He instructed the ten lepers to "go shew yourselves unto the priests" (Lk. 17:14).

Thus in view of the Lord's teaching on the tithe and His continual support of the Law it is seen that it was in matters of conduct rather than principle that the Lord criticized the Pharisees. He could not support the Law without including the tithe since the tithe was a vital part of the Law. Hence, not only would He support the Law in its demands upon the Jew, but also He would fulfill the Law Himself.

Therefore, the strong inference is that Jesus also tithed according to the standards of the Law. It is recognized that there is no record of such an act on His part, but certainly the record of His relation to the Law makes it a strong probability or He would have been attacked at this point by His enemies. Now that Jesus' support of the tithe principle has been established we shall move into the Scripture passages which are found after the Cross and after Christ had fulfilled the demands of the Law to discover if that principle has been carried over into what is commonly called "the Day of Grace" – this church age. Two principle passages of Scripture will be considered in the following study: I Corinthians 9:13, 14 and Hebrews 7:8.

I Corinthians 9:13, 14

Since there is only one passage in the New Testament where the "tithe" or "tenth" is mentioned (Heb. 7:2-9) in such a way as to be associated with our subject, it is difficult to study the subject, for thus we are dependent upon a careful scrutiny of the New Testament for allusions or statements which may refer to the tithe, yet which do not name it. Because the problem is of this nature many people dismiss the subject as being foreign to the Day of Grace and they affirm that the tithe principle is not for us today, but that it was only for the legal system of the Old Testament. But there are at least two passages which some students consider to teach the tithe (I Cor. 9:13, 14; Heb. 7:1-10) and which, therefore, merit careful consideration before a reasonable conclusion may

be formulated concerning whether or not the New Testament teaches the tithe principle as does the Old Testament. We shall now address ourselves to the task of a detailed consideration of these two passages.

Paul's Teaching In I Cor. 9:1-12

This passage is the background for the two verses which we need to analyze; hence a running survey of it will be sufficient for our purpose. In chapter eight the Apostle Paul had mentioned his willingness to deny himself if by that means he could benefit others. He had acted on that principle and according to the passage under consideration, he purposed to act still further. Thus his action on this principle would clearly account for his conduct when he was with them. The argument of this passage also is a defense of his apostolic office and would meet all the objections which had been made against his apostleship.

Paul had refused financial support from the Corinthian believers and apparently some of them, if not all of them, had interpreted this as an admission on his part that he was not an apostle. Consequently Paul proceeded to demonstrate his right to maintenance (yet he did not urge it for himself), and thus to establish the right of Christian ministers to receive salaries for the maintenance of themselves and their families. In renouncing support from the Corinthians for himself he did it with a view to the furtherance of his work among them, or rather it was for fear that his work might be hampered. He was concerned lest the Corinthians might accuse

him of selfish motives and thus his influence would be greatly hindered. His own words are: “nevertheless, we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ” (v. 12).

The right to receive support as a minister of the Gospel is defended on at least five specific grounds.

He was an apostle. — As an apostle he had the same rights as were being granted to his fellow ministers (vs. 1-6). His apostleship was attested by the fact that he had seen Jesus in His flesh (v. 1) which undoubtedly refers to his experience on the Damascus road. Also his apostleship had been sealed by his work in Corinth (v. 2), for he had brought that church into being. Furthermore, he had the right to their support as others had (v. 4) and, if he so desired, he could have the fellowship of a wife even as others (v. 5). Thus as an apostle he had the same rights as other ministers had.

He had the right to the customs of society. — Those not engaged in the ministry were recognized as entitled to remuneration for their services. The soldier, the vinedresser, and the shepherd deserved and received wages for their work (v. 7). Therefore, why should not the Christian minister?

The Law of Moses taught this principle. — By this legal system the needs of the ox were faithfully provided whereby he could partake of his labor when treading out the grain (v. 9). This provision was not intended merely for the oxen, but also to teach the principle that the labourer was

worthy of his hire (v. 10). Therefore, Paul says that since they have benefitted from his spiritual teaching, it was only natural that he should receive material support from them (v. 11).

The church was supporting other Christian teachers. — Since this was being done by the Corinthian church, who had a better claim to their support than he who was the founder of their church? Thus while others had burdened them, he had endured hardship and privation in order to avoid occasion for complaint and criticism which might have embarrassed his work (v. 12).

The example of the priests' support. — Finally, Paul calls their attention to the fact that the Jewish priests were supported by the offerings which were brought to the temple, for they were allotted portions of the animals as food for their families (v. 13). If the priests were worthy of this provision, so was Paul equally as worthy. Moreover this was true because the Lord had perpetuated this principle in its application to the Christian ministry by having "ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel" (v. 14).

Thus it is seen how carefully Paul has defended himself and the right which he and all Christian ministers had to be supported by the Lord's people for the supply of their material needs. The instructions in verses 13 and 14 now claim our attention to see what, if any, is their contribution to the teaching of the tithe principle in the New Testament.

I Corinthians 9:13

Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? (I Cor. 9:13).

This verse and the one immediately following are inseparably linked together, for this verse furnishes the basis for that which is presented in verse 14. It is very obvious that Paul intends the two verses to teach that God has ordained that the Christian workers shall be supported by the gifts of the Lord's people. That being the case the question naturally arises, "does this support come from the tithe of the people as in the Old Testament, or is there no specified plan of giving as far as proportionate giving is concerned?" There are those who say that nothing more than the principle of a paid ministry is involved while others affirm that the tithe is taught here as the basis for carrying on the Lord's work today. There is only one way to decide which view is correct and that is to make a careful analysis of these two verses and to draw a conclusion which such an analysis will justify. We shall proceed to that analysis.

The ministers in the temple. — This verse is Paul's illustration of the doctrine that those who are the Lord's ministers today are entitled to receive support because those who previously were appointed to receive sacrifices received maintenance from their work. The fact that the priests were supported in that fashion was so well-known that he asked the rhetorical question, "do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple?" (v. 13a) merely to remind them of that which they knew. Two views are

held concerning those of whom Paul is speaking: (1) that those who ministered in holy things refer to both Jewish and heathen attendants in their respective religious worship; and (2) that Paul was referring only to Jews. The first view is held by Ruckert,¹ while Ambrosiaster is credited with the view that the first part of the verse refers to the Gentiles and the last part to the Jews.² Neither of these views seem to be very popular, for the vast majority of the writers prefer to understand the verse to refer to the Jews' temple worship only. Lenski states it very well in the following paragraph:

Paul is certainly not thinking of pagan temples and heathen priests. The Corinthians have turned their backs on all pagan temples. Their priests do indeed also obtain their support from their temples, but all this paganism with its temples and its priests ought to be abolished, and has no right to exist in the sight of God. An appeal to pagan practices would thus react on Paul himself and would destroy at one stroke all that he is building up.³

It is true that in the heathen worship as well as in the Jewish it was customary for the priests who were employed in the sacred ceremonies to eat of the sacrifices, but it does not seem as though Paul would appeal to heathen customs to establish his point in connection with Christian practice.

¹ As stated by Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistles to the Corinthians, trans. D. Douglas Bannerman (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1890), p. 204.

² As stated by Thomas Charles Edwards, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1897), p. 233.

³ R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistle to the Corinthians (Columbus: Wartburg Press, 1947), pp. 366, 367.

Also it should be borne in mind that God arranged the temple and its services; thus they had His sanction and Paul would be more likely to use those customs as an illustration rather than the heathen. Furthermore, to Paul, the zealous Jew; there was only one temple worthy of being called the Temple. Therefore, when he referred to the “holy things” nothing of heathen rituals could meet that standard in his estimation. Thus Paul seems to appeal to a Divine authority which would make it impossible for him to speak of the heathen practices in the same context as these. In the words of Godet we would say:

Finally, in this sense the expression: even so, ves. 14, would become unsuitable; for the apostle could not put on the same level the authority of heathen customs and that of the Lord.¹

Thus it seems that the temple (and its services), very probably is the Temple in Jerusalem.

Since there would seem to be very little room for doubt that the Jerusalem Temple was in view, then the “holy things” would refer to the means of support which those who ministered in that Temple received. Ellicott states that all who ministered in the Temple “had their share in the gifts and offerings, is all that the Apostle is here pressing. Work in what belonged to God received its appropriate wages.”²

There are three views as to the identity of these

¹ F. Godet, Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, trans. A. Cusin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1957), II, 21.

² Charles J. Ellicott, A Critical and Grammatical Commentary on St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians (Andover: W. F. Draper, 1839), p. 172.

Jewish ministers: (1) that the priests are referred to throughout the verse; (2) that the first half of the verse refers to the Levites while the last half of the verse refers to the priests; and (3) that the first part of the verse denotes the Levitical order inclusive of the priests and the second part refers to the priests only.¹ The third view seems to be more acceptable, for the phrase, “the holy things,” is a general term² and it seems to fit the situation better since the latter part of the verse designates specifically the “altar” in contrast to the “temple.” The “altar” suggests the priests; therefore, the “temple” suggests the larger order of Levites inclusive of the priests.

Thus the “holy things” apparently refer to the tithes and offerings which were the means of support for the Levites and priests (Num. 18:21-32). The word “live” supports this proposition, for in the Greek it is ἐσθίουσιν which is the present indicative verb form, third person plural, from the root ἐσθίω meaning “to eat.” Thayer states that since it was used with ἐκ τοῦ ἱεροῦ it means that they “draw their support from the temple, i.e. from the sacrifices and offerings.”³ Therefore, in view of these considerations it appears that Paul is referring to the tithes primarily in the first half of this verse. We shall now consider the last part of the verse.

¹ Godet, op. cit., p. 21.

² Ibid., p. 22.

³ A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, trans., revised and enlarged by Joseph Henry Thayer (New York: American Book Company, 1889), p. 253.

The ministers at the altar. — As was noted in our consideration of the first half of this verse, the “altar” apparently was intended to designate the offering of sacrifices; hence, this would refer to the ministry of the priests rather than the Levites. The Levites assisted the priests in their functions, but it was the priests who offered the sacrifices on the altar. Therefore, it would be the priests who would be “partakers with the altar.” This participation would be accomplished since part of the animal was burned as an offering on the altar and a part became the property of the priest for his support. Thus the priest derived part of his maintenance from the sacrifices and part from the tithes which the people gave to the Levites. As has been noted previously this was Jehovah’s provision for the support of both the Levites and priests since they had no inheritance in this land.

The Greek is quite descriptive as seen in the word “wait,” which is *προσεδρεύοντες*, a present participle from the root *προσεδρεύω*. It means “to sit near, to attend assiduously,”¹ thus the priest is described as one sitting in readiness to offer the sacrifices. Since the priests were so devoted to the altar they have their share with the altar as shown in the verb, “are partakers,” which is *συμμερίζονται*, the present indicative from the root *συμμερίζω* which means “to divide at the same time,

¹*Ibid.*, p. 544.

divide together; to assign a portion.”¹ Thus the priests being devoted to the altar have their share with the altar and receive their μέρος or portion for themselves.”²

Therefore, the sum of what Paul has said in this verse is that the Corinthians knew that the Law provided for the support of the Levites including the priests from the “holy things” of the Temple which only can be understood to refer primarily to the tithes. Furthermore, those who waited at the altar were the priests who shared with the altar in the sacrifices which the people offered to God. Thus Paul has clearly pointed not only to the Levites and the priests as being supported by the people, but also to the divinely appointed method of their support, that is by the tithe, but with the addition of portions of the sacrifices for the priests.

Thus Paul has very carefully reminded the Corinthians of that which they knew, that the Levites (inclusive of the priests) were supported by the first, or Levitical tithe, and the priests received a further means of maintenance from their share with the altar sacrifices. With this as a basis, he then moved to a positive statement of the Lord’s provision for the spiritual leaders of today even as the Lord earlier had made provision for the spiritual leaders of Israel. We now proceed to analyze Paul’s statement for today.

¹Ibid., p. 596.

² Lenski, op. cit., p. 373.

I Corinthians 9:14

A casual reading of this verse will demonstrate that it is an important verse and that it is vitally connected with the Apostle's argument of the preceding verses of this chapter and especially with verse 13. In order that we may have the verse clearly before us it is quoted as follows: "even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel."

The contextual argument which Paul has built up may be summarized in a four-fold manner:¹ (1) the analogical argument in favor of his rights (v. 7) has been strengthened by (2) the Mosaic argument of the oxen (vs. 8, 9), and by the argument of the Levitical and priestly support (v. 13); (3) the common sense argument, in that it is reasonable for those who give up their time, energy, and gifts for Christian service should be supported by those to whom they minister; and (4) the express ordination of Christ. As though the preceding arguments were not strong enough, Paul finds it necessary to add the strongest argument and the unanswerable one based upon the command of the Head of the Church (v. 14).

Thus the context and the flow of the passage would indicate that here is another argument which Paul is setting forth in support of the proposition that those in the Christian ministry should be supported by those to whom they minister.

¹ Frederick William Farrar, I Corinthians, in The Pulpit Commentary, edited by: H. D. M. Spence and Joseph S. Exell (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1913), p. 303.

However, Ruckert¹ is an example of those few who do not consider this to be a new argument, but rather he regards it as merely the application to the Christian Church of that which was common practice among the Jews and Gentiles (v. 13). However, it is to be objected to this view that Paul “could not possibly have presented the consequence of a Jewish or Gentile usage as a positive command of the Lord.”² Lenski also presents an appropriate comment: “let no one say, this is Jewish, and has no bearing on Christ and on the preachers of the Gospel.”³ It is to be observed that Paul does not again state a rhetorical question as in verse 13, but he solemnly declares a fact which has a vital connection to the preceding verse through the analogy which he has presented. Now let us proceed to an analysis of the verse.

Various translations. — We have already quoted the text from the King James Version; therefore, for comparative purposes, we shall find it profitable to view several other English translations which are as follows:

1. American Standard Version: “even so did the Lord ordain,” etc.
2. Companion Bible (footnote); “so did the Lord also ordain, etc.
3. Douay Version: “so also the Lord ordained,” etc.
4. Goodspeed, The Bible; An American Translation: “in just that way the Lord directed,” etc.
5. Moffatt, The Bible, A New Translation: “so the Lord’s instructions,” etc.

¹ From Godet, op. cit., p. 22.

² Godet, op. cit., p. 22.

³ Lenski, op. cit., p. 373.

6. Moulton, The Modern Reader's Bible: "even so did the Lord ordain," etc.
7. Revised Standard Version: "in the same way, the Lord commanded," etc. b

It will be observed that there is very little difference in these translations, for all have faithfully carried out the Greek idea that the Lord has given some kind of a specific instruction concerning the support of the Christian ministry. It is to be noted that two of these translations are a bit more specific than are the others, namely, Goodspeed, and the Revised Standard Version. The propriety of these two translations can be determined only after an examination of the verse which we purpose to accomplish in the next few pages.

"Even so". — With these words, the verse opens and in their interpretation is to be found the key to this passage and its meaning and value for our day. There are two views for the interpretation of this verse: (1) that Paul is saying that as the Lord provided the sustenance for the Levites and priests under the Mosaic Law, by the offerings of the people, so today He has declared that the Christian ministers shall be supported by the people to whom they minister; and (2) that the Lord not only established the principle stated in the first view, but that He also included the same basic method of the tithe as was true for the Levites and priests. Thus it is recognized that the passage either teaches the tithe or it does not. Therefore, we need to establish as far as possible the true meaning of the verses based upon a legitimate analysis of them. As previously stated, the first

two words of verse 14 are the key to the interpretation; hence, we now shall consider them.

1. The Greek form is, οὕτως καὶ. — There is no appreciable difference between the translation of these words by the various expositors and the translations already noted in the various English versions of the Bible. However, we note some examples by the various expositors, as follows, that we may verify the similarities:

- (1) Findlay: "so also";¹
- (2) Godet: "and so also";²
- (3) Alford: "so also";³
- (4) Lenski: "thus also";⁴
- (5) Wordsworth: "thus also";⁵
- (6) Edwards: "so also".⁶

These translations obviously are all in accord with the Possibility of the Greek, but we must examine the words more closely to determine their full meaning.

2. The word "οὕτως". — Here is an adverb which

¹ G. G. Findlay, The Expositor's Greek Testament, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951), II, 850.

² Godet, I Corinthians, II, 22.

³ Alford, op. cit., IV, 546.

⁴ Lenski, Corinthians, p. 373.

⁵ Chr. Wordsworth, The New Testament of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in the Original Greek (fifth edition, London: Rivingtons, 1870), II, 112.

⁶ Thomas Charles Edwards, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians (third edition, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1897), p. 233.

according to Abbott-Smith means, “in this way, so, thus,”¹ and which therefore suggests something of the close connection between this verse and the preceding analogy of the biblical support for the Levites and priests of verse 13.

The meaning, “in this way,” takes on significance when it is remembered how the Levites and priests were supported by the tithes. Previously it has been observed that the “holy things” of verse 13 refer more probably to the tithes of the Old Testament than to heathen practices, for Paul could not be expected to speak of heathen procedures as “holy.”

Therefore, since οὕτως the meaning of, “in this way,” it is possible that in this instance it points to more than merely the idea that the Levites and priests were supported by the people of Israel. Since the method (i.e. the tithe) is indicated by the “holy things,” that, too, can be included in that to which Paul refers. This possibility conforms to the use of adverbs, as defined by Dana and Mantey who say that adverbs “are used to express relationship of time, place, manner, and degree. Thus they are used for answering such natural questions as when, where, how, how much, and sometimes to what extent.”² Hence, in view of (1) the meaning of οὕτως (in this way), (2) the use of adverbs to express “how,” “how much,” or “to what extent,” and (3) the reference to the support of the Levites and priests by the

¹ G. Abbott-Smith, A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1944), p. 329.

² H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament (New York: The Macmillan Company; 1943), p. 234.

tithe, it is clear that Paul's statement in verse 14 easily could refer to the tithe as well as to the idea that spiritual leaders should be supported by the Lord's people.

Furthermore, very strong support is given by Thayer to this analysis when he defines οὕτως in the following way: "by virtue of its native demonstrative force it refers to what precedes; in the like manner spoken of; in the way described; in the way it was done; in this manner; in such a manner; thus, so."¹ By this means Thayer has given emphasis to the adverbial idea of "manner" which idea is in agreement with the use of adverbs as explained above by Dana and Mantey. Thus, since in the previous verse Paul has referred to how, or the manner in which the Levites and priests were maintained, it would seem to be perfectly correct to understand οὕτως as referring to the way in which it was done for those Old Testament spiritual leaders.

This is not an isolated use of οὕτως, for it is used quite frequently in the New Testament and in many instances it is apparent that it carries this idea of "manner," or "in the way described," or "in the way it was done." Let us note a few instances in which it refers in like manner to that which precedes.

(1) Our Lord said: "let your light so shine before men" etc. (Mt. 5:16). Thus He referred to the preceding statement concerning the lamp and the light which it gave forth as the way in which His people were to show forth their

¹ Thayer, op. cit., p. 468.

good works and glorify their heavenly Father.

(2) Upon another occasion our Lord said of Himself: "likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them" (Mt. 17: 12). He thus referred to His preceding statement concerning John the Baptist's suffering and death as the same experience which He would receive from the nation.

(3) A third statement by our Lord Jesus Christ is with reference to the manner of His coming death where He said: "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up" (Jo. 3:14). Thus He signified the manner of His death by referring to a preceding statement which described the lifting up of the fiery serpent as descriptive of His own crucifixion.

(4) In I Cor. 8:11 Paul refers to a preceding statement by saying: "when ye sin so against the brethren." He had just condemned failure to recognize the limitation of Christian liberty and through the word "so" he said that if they had sinned "in that way" against a brother, then it was sin against Christ also.

Thus these illustrations show something of the force of οὕτως as an adverb which refers to that which precedes in the sense of "in the like manner spoken of," or "in the way described." Taken as an adverb of manner it is seen that Paul could be referring to the method of maintenance for the Levites and priests as the same method for the ministers of the Gospel today.

3. The word καὶ. — This is by far the most common

of the conjunctions in the New Testament¹ and it causes the casual Greek student considerable difficulty because it has so many diversified uses. Although it has such a variety of uses "it is often used as a mere mechanical connective (a copulative), and it is left for the reader to determine which translation best suits the context."² There are three³ generally accepted classifications and meanings for this word:

(1) transitional or continuative, meaning "and"; (2) adjunctive, meaning "also"; and (3) ascensive, meaning "even."

To these three Dana and Mantey also add two other classifications:⁴ (1) adversative, meaning "and yet," "however," and "but"; and (2) emphatic, meaning "indeed, verily, really, in fact, yea, certainly, etc., instead of by the one word even."

Furthermore, Thayer points out that beside the connective sense, or copulative sense, καὶ may also mark "something added to what has already been said, or that of which something already said holds good; accordingly, it takes on the nature of an adverb."⁵ Therefore, in our passage, since οὕτως is an adverb and since καὶ also may take on adverbial characteristics, it is possible that καὶ has taken on the nature of an adverb here. In this case καὶ seems to be marking something which Paul has added to what he has already

¹ Dana and Mantey, op. cit., p. 250; Thayer, op. cit., p. 315

² Dana and Mantey, op. cit., p. 250.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵ Thayer, op. cit., p. 316.

said in verse 13. Also it becomes apparent that this is not the transitional sense of *καὶ*, for the context does not justify the meaning “and.” Neither is it the adversative sense, “and yet,” however according to the context it is possible to understand it to be emphatic in its meaning, but that use does not seem to be fully satisfactory. Thus we are left with the two alternatives: adjunctive, “also,” or ascensive, “even,” both of which do make good sense in the context. However, in view of Thayer’s statement, which has just been noted, the flow of the passage seems to require that we recognize that verse 14 has added something to what has already been said in verse 13. Therefore, if that is true, then *καὶ* has taken on the nature of an adverb and the adjunctive meaning of, “also,” suits the passage best.

Now that we have ascertained the possibilities of the two words, *οὕτως* and *καὶ* separately, we must needs consider them taken together.

4. The words *οὕτως καὶ*. — Keeping in mind what we have seen concerning these words separately we must also note that Thayer states that when *καὶ* has the adverbial sense its simple meaning is “also.”¹ Moreover, when *καὶ* is joined with comparative adverbs like *οὕτως* it still has the simple meaning “also.”² Hence, when these two adverbs *οὕτως* and *καὶ* are used together it is to be expected that *καὶ* will retain its adverbial meaning “also.”

¹*Ibid.*

²*Ibid.*, p. 317

Therefore, when we take the meaning of οὕτως and combine it with that of καὶ the apparent meaning is, “in the like manner spoken of also,” or “in the way it was done also,” or “in this manner also.” Buttmann also concurs in this meaning of καὶ¹

Examples of this meaning are not lacking in the New Testament; therefore, we shall note several as illustrative of this translation.

(1) Rom. 5:18 – “Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.”

(2) Rom. 11:5 – “Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.”

(3) I Cor. 2:11 – “For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.”

(4) I Cor. 15:22 – “for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”

(5) Eph. 5:24 – “Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.”

It should be noted that the above examples of the use of οὕτως καὶ not only reveal the idea that reference is made to something that has preceded and the present action

¹ Alexander Buttmann, A Grammar of the New Testament Greek, trans. J. H. Thayer (Andover: Warren E. Draper, Publisher, 1880), p. 362.

is to be “in the like manner spoken of; in the way described; in the way it was done; in this manner,”¹ but that the adjunctive meaning, “also,” is included. Furthermore, all of these examples illustrate Paul’s use of these two words which demonstrates that the passage with which we are concerned is not an isolated one.

Therefore, in view of the preceding considerations there seems to be ample justification to interpret the words, *οὕτως καὶ*, as meaning that which is instructed in verse 14 is to be done exactly as it was done in verse 13. That being the case the better translation of these words must be more expressive of the true meaning than the simple “even so” of the King James Version and the other similar translations. Goodspeed’s translation, “in just that way,” comes very close to expressing the real meaning, but it could be improved by including the adjunctive force of *καὶ* and thus it could be translated: “in just that way also.” Hence, it appears that Paul is saying that the Christian ministry is to receive its sustenance from the Christian people in the same way as the Levites of old (including the priests) received theirs from the first tithe of the Israelites. In commenting upon the phrase, “even so,” Barnes has caught the intent of the words and expressed it this way: “in the same manner, and for the same reasons.”²

¹ Thayer, op. cit., p. 468.

² Albert Barnes, I Corinthians, in Notes on the New Testament Explanatory and Practical, Edited by Robert Frew (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1956), p. 161.

“Hath the Lord ordained”. – Undoubtedly the word “Lord” refers to the Lord Jesus Christ who has sent forth His servants to labour in the harvest field of the world. It is He who has “ordained” something. The Greek word for “hath ordained” is διέταξεν, which is the aorist indicative active of the root διατάσσω meaning “to arrange, appoint, ordain, prescribe, give order.”¹ Since this is the aorist tense it is therefore historical and reports the undeniable fact of that which has taken place.² Thus the Lord has appointed or arranged that it should be so, that is, this is something which the Lord has required. With reference to this arrangement by the Lord Findlay says “the allusion speaks for detailed knowledge of the sayings of Jesus, on the part of writer and readers.”³

Whatever this command was, Meyer points out that it “is linked to the foregoing relations under the O. T. economy, with which it corresponds.”⁴ It is of interest to note that Paul does not ask a second time: “do you not know” this?, but instead he simply states the fact that there was a command from the Lord. He does not quote the command, but he does indicate his familiarity with it. Apparently Paul was orally familiar with the discourses of the Lord and Farrar suggests that “there is nothing impossible or improbable in the supposition

¹ Thayer, op. cit., p. 142; cf. Abbott-Smith, op. cit., p. 112.

² Lenski, op. cit., p. 373.

³ Findlay, op. cit., p. 850.

⁴ Meyer, op. cit., p. 204.

position that some of these were already being circulated in manuscript.”¹ Of course, such a suggestion cannot be verified today; hence, we cannot identify the command. However, some expositors think that Paul has simply restated Mt. 10:10 and Lk. 10:7, 8 as the substance of this command.²

In both of these passages the principle that “the labourer is worthy of his hire” is stated and Paul certainly agrees with that principle. Furthermore, in view of what seems to be the import of οὕτως this command of the Lord is very closely joined to the preceding verse by καὶ. Thus we have something which the Lord definitely appointed, arranged, ordained, or commanded concerning the support of the Christian ministry which is to be done in the like manner as that for the support of the Levites and priests in the Old Testament economy. Godet’s comment is, “this is the last fact which completes the proof of the apostles’ right”³ to receive their sustenance from the Christian people.

Christian workers “should live of the gospel”. — There hardly can be any question but that Paul is referring to all those who devote their lives to the work of the Lord, who are called and employed by the Lord Jesus Christ. This is clearly portrayed by the word, καταγγέλλουσιν which is the dative present active participle from the root καταγγέλλω, which means “to announce or proclaim.” The

¹ Farrar, op. cit., p. 289.

² Lenski op. cit., p. 373; Alford op. cit., p. 546

Godet, op. cit., p. 22.

³ Godet, op. cit., p. 22.

dative does not mean that the command is given to the preachers, but “it is the dative of favour: for them.”¹ Furthermore, the present participle is qualitative: “for those engaged in proclaiming,”² and thus it describes His apostles and servants. Lenski further comments that this participle is “like the two present participles in v. 13; ‘engaged in working,’ ‘engaged in waiting on.’”³

These workers whom Paul has identified are to “live of the gospel.” The analogy seems to be clear that as the Levites lived of the “holy things” (the tithe) of their calling, “in the like manner spoken of also” (οὕτως καὶ) the ministers of the Gospel must live by their calling. The word ζῆν is the present infinitive of ζάω which means “to live, be alive (not lifeless, not dead).”⁴ Thayer comments that in this verse it means “to get a living from a thing,”⁵ that is by their function of preaching the Gospel. It should be noted that Paul does not say “to live of the altar,” for the Christian has no altar of sacrifice as found in the Temple.

The preposition ἐκ its association with ζῆν bears out the idea that the minister of the Gospel receives his maintenance out of that ministry. The simple meaning of

¹Ibid., p. 23.

² Lenski, *op. cit.*, p. 373.

³Ibid.

⁴ Thayer, *op. cit.*, p. 269.

⁵Ibid., p. 270.

ἐκ is “out of, from within” and Thayer explains that when it is used especially after neuter and passive verbs it expresses “the cause (whether thing or person) by which the act expressed by the accompanying verb is aided, sustained, [or] effected.”¹

Thus the phrase, “live of the Gospel,” is not specific as to the time, place, gifts, or salary, but that the Christian worker should be supported and maintained “out of” that Gospel ministry – it is the source of his livelihood. Barnes’ comment is simple and direct: “the men may be said ‘to live in the gospel’ who is supported while he preaches it, or who derives his maintenance in that work.”²

Conclusion

An excellent summary of the principle that the Christian worker should be supported financially by the Lord’s people is given by Godet from which we quote extensively as follows:

According to St. Paul, the Lord has established in His Church a class of members occupying a particular position. While other believers realize the new life in the exercise of a secular profession which affords them a livelihood, they renounce every secular occupation to concentrate all their time and powers to the development of the spiritual life in others; and consequently the Church to which they thus consecrate their life is bound to provide for their material support, . . . Such is the foundation of the institution of the Christian ministry. . . . [Jesus] confined Himself to instituting a ministry to preach and have the cure of souls, the members of which live for the Gospel, and consequently ought also to live

¹ Thayer, op. cit., p. 190.

² Barnes, op. cit., p. 161.

of the Gospel. But woe to that man who claims to live of the gospel without living at the same time for the Gospel.¹

As these verses have been analyzed, we have observed that in this chapter, Paul has demonstrated by five arguments with increasing force the right which he and all Christian workers have to receive their sustenance from the believers. The climax to his argument is the analogy in verses 13, and 14 of the maintenance of the Levites (including the priests) from the “holy things” of the Temple, with the right of the Christian teacher to be similarly supplied. The problem lies in whether any plan for the support of the Christian workers is encompassed in this analogy.

It was observed that verse 13 has two rhetorical questions which declare that the Corinthian believers knew that those who ministered “about holy things” received their sustenance from that source; likewise, those who ministered “at the altar” received support therefrom. Since Num. 18:21-32 instructs that the Levites were to receive their maintenance from the first tithe and the priests were to receive a tithe from the Levites for the same purpose, there seems to be a connection between that passage and the one under consideration. In verse 13, the things of the altar undoubtedly refer to the sacrifices from which the priests received support above the tithe provision. Hence, since the tithe was “holy unto the Lord” (Lev. 27:30, 32) and since Paul refers to the “holy things” as the means of livelihood, it follows

¹ Godet, op. cit., p. 23.

that he apparently is referring to the first tithe which was “holy unto the Lord,” yet which the Lord had assigned to the Levites and priests for their support.

With this in mind the meaning of “even so” becomes highly significant, for the two words, οὕτως καὶ, apparently mean “in the like manner spoken of also,” or “in the way described also,” or “in the way it was done also,” or “in this manner also.” Since οὕτως, by its very nature, has the demonstrative force, it therefore refers to that which precedes (v. 13); and since καὶ apparently has taken on the nature of an adverb and the adjunctive meaning of “also,” it therefore connects vitally the two verses. Furthermore, καὶ seems to mark something that Paul has added to that which he has already stated in verse 13. Thus the thing that he has added to the truth of the first tithe is that today that same principle of the tithe is operative.

He continues by stating that the Lord has appointed this method as the means of maintenance for those who are in Christian service. Therefore, it would appear that more is involved in these two verses than simply the principle that the labourer is worthy of his hire; for the method of providing the support of the Christian worker seems to be the tithe as it has been God’s plan throughout the Old Testament. Thus it appears that the Old and New Testaments combine to provide one basic plan for the full support of God’s workers.

We now move on to the second important passage in the New Testament bearing upon our subject.

Hebrews 7:8

Although the word “tithe” was not found in the previous Scripture which we considered, we now must note a passage wherein the word does appear not only in the verse, but also in the context. The verse to which we refer is: “And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth” (Heb. 7:8). The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews reminds his readers of the experience in which Abraham gave a tithe of the spoils to Melchizedek the priest of the Most High God and by that he shows Melchizedek to be a type of Christ. Previously we have considered this experience of Abraham in its relation to the subject of the tithe prior to the Mosaic Law. But since this incident has been brought into the New Testament, it must be studied carefully to determine what, if anything, it contributes to the subject of New Testament tithing.

This person, Melchizedek, must be an important person in the estimation of the Holy Spirit since He has given to him such a prominent place in Scripture. Furthermore, it must be observed that the way he is spoken of throughout Scripture certainly implies that the Jews were acquainted with him, for nowhere is he explained in the Old Testament. However, in the New Testament, in the passage before us, he is somewhat explained. Therefore, it is essential that we understand clearly the New Testament presentation of Melchizedek in conjunction with the Old Testament in order properly to evaluate his relation to the New Testament teaching on the tithe. Hence, we move to a consideration of the context in which

Hebrews 7:8 is found.

Hebrews 7:1-10

Hermeneutically speaking we must observe closely the context of any passage of Scripture which we attempt to explain, for neglect at this point can lead, and has led some people into error concerning what the Bible teaches. First of all it is necessary to understand the purpose of the Hebrews epistle which is to show the superiority of Christianity over Judaism as seen in its founder, Jesus Christ. To accomplish that end the writer presents four powerful lines of argument which show Christ's superiority to: (1) the prophets (1:1-3); (2) the angels (1:4-2:18); (3) the great leader, Moses (3:1-6); and (4) the Aaronic priesthood with its Temple service (4:14-10:25). Then, second, a summary of Hebrews 7:1-10 will give us the background and necessary approach to the important eighth verse.

Melchizedek a type of Christ (vs. 1-3). — In Heb. 5: 6, 10, the writer first mentions Melchizedek in connection with Christ and how that he desires to discuss that subject; however, he does not really get into the subject until 6:20 and from there on through chapter seven. It is evident that the opening verses of the chapter reveal that Melchizedek is a type of Christ in the following particulars.¹

¹ A detailed study of this typology is outside the scope of this paper — a summary is all that is needed here.

1. He is a type as King as seen in the names which he bore. He was known as “Melchizedek,” king of righteousness, and also as “King of Salem,” which is king of peace (v. 2). Even so Christ also is the Lord our Righteousness (Jer. 23:6); and He is the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6).

2. He is a type as priest (v. 3; cf. Gen. 14:18). So Christ is a priest (Heb. 4:14, 15; 5:10) after the order of Melchizedek. ‘

3. As the Priest of the Most High God, Possessor of heaven and earth, he was not a priest for any particular nation, as the Levitical priests were, but he was the universal Priest. So Christ is the universal Priest of all nations since He died for the sin of the world (Jo. 1:29).

4. He blessed Abraham and so exercised a spiritual preeminence over him and his seed and he received tithes from Abraham in recognition that he was Priest of the Most High God (v. 2; Gen. 14:18). Furthermore, in those tithes the Levitical priests were reckoned also as having tithed (vs. 9, 10). So Christ blesses His people and He ever liveth in Heaven as our Priest making intercession for us (Heb. 7:25).

5. Melchizedek was also a type in the shadow of eternity which the Holy Spirit gave to Him in that he is introduced without any previous notice of ancestry, or subsequent progeny – he stands alone as no other great personage. He has remained a priest forever (v. 3) – he has a typical eternity. So Christ is not only priest forever, but also He is the sacrificial victim for eternity having exhausted and fulfilled all the legal sacrifices of the Aaronic Priesthood.

Since it has been demonstrated that Melchizedek is a type of Christ it must needs follow that he is not Christ Himself, for the following reasons:

1. He is only said to be “like unto the Son of God” (v. 3). Commentators are not agreed as to the meaning of this statement. Since the interpretation here does not affect the interpretation of verse 8, and furthermore, since the passage deserves more careful consideration in another paper, we give only this brief analysis. It is to be noted that Melchizedek is not said to be “like” (ὁμοιόω) Christ, but he is said to be “made like” (ἀφωμοιωμένος) “unto Christ,” for no one is ever said to be “like” himself.¹ Thus Barmby states that Melchizedek is “represented in such wise as to resemble”² Christ; and Westcott also says: “the truth is of general application. The physical, the historical, is the limited representation of the spiritual, the eternal.”³ Thus Westcott has clearly called attention to the hermeneutical fact that no person or event ever can fully represent a spiritual truth,⁴ which fact would be true of Melchizedek since he was only a

¹ Wordsworth, *op. cit.*, p. 399.

² James Barmby, *Hebrews*, in *The Pulpit Commentary*, edited by: H. D. M. Spence and Joseph S. Exell (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, n.d.), p. 184.

³ Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950), p. 173.

⁴ Ramm on typology says: “the typical truth is at the points of similarity, and the surrounding area of dissimilarity is the natural, historical, or geographic background of the type necessary for its very existence. One of the cardinal errors in typology is to make typical the dissimilar elements in a type,” *op. cit.*, pp. 144, 145.

man. Furthermore, Westcott states,

The choice of the participle [ἀφωμοιωμένος] in place of ὁμοιόω shows that the resemblance lies in the biblical representation and not primarily in Melchizedek himself. The comparison is not between Christ and Melchizedek, but between Christ and the isolated portraiture of Melchizedek; and that in regard to the divine Nature of the Incarnate Son (τῷ υἱῷ τοῦ θεοῦ) and not to His human Nature in which He both was born and died, nor even to His official dignity τῷ Χριστῷ.¹

Wuest also calls attention to the typological aspect by declaring that “one could not have a type that was in itself eternal, for then one would have the reality, not the type.”² Hence, the likeness of Melchizedek to Christ is not as a man, but as the Son of God. Therefore, as a man Christ was born and He died, but as Son of God neither was true of Him. Thus the priesthood of Melchizedek continued to the end in his person without a break. He had no successor, thus he abides perpetually as a priest; not literally, but since no death is recorded so it is assumed that he is still alive. Thus he is a fitting type of the eternity of being which is true of Christ as the High Priest. Therefore, it may be said that he is only “like unto the Son of God,” and not Christ himself. ‘

2. Furthermore, he is not Christ, for every priest is taken from among men (5:1; 7:14) and the Incarnation had not yet taken place. Therefore, Christ was not yet a man.

3. Again it should be noticed that Melchizedek could not have been Christ, for Melchizedek has a local residence

¹ Westcott, op. cit., p. 173.

² Kenneth S. Wuest, Hebrews in the Greek New Testament for the English Reader (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1947), p. 127

at “Salem” (v. 1). But Christ has no such localized residence.

Thus it is that Melchizedek is seen to be a type of Christ as the Priest and after that the writer turns to Compare this priesthood with the Levitical priesthood.

The relation of Melchizedek to the Levitical priesthood (vs. 4-10). — The writer has already discussed the historical notice of Melchizedek in itself and now goes on to consider the relation of Melchizedek’s priesthood to the Law.

He does this by showing the general position of Melchizedek (v. 4) and then by elucidating several points of his superiority. This is accomplished by showing that Melchizedek was better than Abraham in order to show Melchizedek’s superiority to Levi and thus his superiority to Aaron. Therefore, it follows that if Melchizedek is superior to Aaron, then likewise, his priesthood is superior to Aaron’s. Hence, since Messiah’s priesthood is in the order of the priesthood of Melchizedek, that makes His priesthood superior to Aaron’s also. By this means, then, one of the arguments showing the superiority of Christianity over Judaism has been established.

We shall now note the flow of the passage.

1. The general superiority of Melchizedek over Abraham is stated in verse 4 where our attention is called to consider how great this man was. The word θεωρεῖτε (consider) “expresses the regard of attentive contemplation.”¹ Therefore, it is not used of an indifferent spectator, “but

¹ Westcott, op. cit., p. 175.

of one who looks at a thing with interest and attention. . . . It speaks of a critical, discriminating inspection.”¹ Scripture is not in the custom of calling attention to the greatness of man, but rather it calls attention to the fact that he is less than nothing (cf. Rom. 3:12). Yet Melchizedek is called great, for we are told Abraham recognized that greatness. Thus we are challenged to “consider” this man’s greatness, the evidence of which is that it was no less a personage than Abraham who gave him a tenth from the spoils of his victory over the kings (cf. v. 1). This greatness is further established by identifying Abraham as the patriarch to whom the people of Israel owe their very human existence—he is the fountain of all the families of Levi and Aaron—he is the progenitor of the Hebrew race and yet Melchizedek is greater than he. Note that in establishing this greatness, it is assumed throughout that the receiver of tithes is greater than the giver of the tithes.

2. The significance of this tithe given by Abraham is seen when it is compared with the tithes which the Levites took from the people. In the latter case, it was a mere legal appointment for certain sons of Abraham (Levites) to take tithes of the rest of the sons of Abraham, but in no case was there an acknowledgment of inferiority—it was mere compliance with the law (v. 5). But Abraham was under no such compliance with law to tithe to Melchizedek; it was his tribute to the greatness of Melchizedek and the recognition of his

¹ Wuest, op. cit., p. 128.

own inferiority.

3. Melchizedek is in striking contrast to the Levites (v. 6), for his claim to the priesthood rested upon no pedigree or genealogy. Alford translates the first half of the verse as follows: "But he whose pedigree is never reckoned from them."¹ Thus the claim of Melchizedek to the priesthood rested upon no human descent, but only upon "his inherent personal title."² This unusual person "received tithes of Abraham" and thus he is set in striking contrast to the Levites who have a proper descent according to the Law. The word *δεδεκάτωκεν* is the perfect indicative active and means "hath taken tithes,"³ and since it is the perfect tense, "the fact is regarded as permanent in its abiding consequences. It stands written in Scripture as having a present force."⁴ Wordsworth affirms the same thing concerning the use of the perfect when he says "that the act was done by Melchizedek, but its effect remains for ever in Christ typified by Melchizedek."⁵ Furthermore, the change in tense seems to be significant, for in verse 4 the aorist (*ἔδωκε*) is used of the mere historical incident that Abraham tithed, while here the perfect (*δεδεκάτωκεν*) denotes "a completed act, of which the effects and significance remain;

¹ Alford, *op. cit.*, IV, 133.

² Westcott, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

³ Alford, *op. cit.*, IV, 133.

⁴ Westcott, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

⁵ Wordsworth, *op. cit.*, p. 401.

Melchizedek, who represents the priesthood after his order, being viewed in permanent relation to Abraham, who represents the chosen race.”¹

Not only did Melchizedek receive tithes of Abraham, but he also blessed him (v. 6b), thus showing that he accepted the exalted position which Abraham accorded him. This exercise of the privilege of a superior is the second mark of preeminence and it should be observed that he exercised it toward one who had the promises and might seem to be above the acceptance of any human blessing.² The verb “blessed” (εὐλόγηκε) is also in the perfect tense thus signifying that which is permanent in its abiding consequences.

4. The principle that “the less is blessed of the better” was operative in this case (v. 7), for that principle is universally recognized as “without all contradiction,” or “controversy.” Alford explains this principle by stating, “it is obvious that the axiom here laid down only holds good where the blessing is a solemn and official one, as of a father, or a priest: as was the case here. In such cases the blessing stands in the place of God, and as so standing is of superior dignity.”³

5. A further contrast between Melchizedek and the Levites is that the priesthood of Melchizedek is enduring while the Levitical is only transitory (v. 8) (but we shall

¹ Barmby, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

² Westcott, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

³ Alford, *op. cit.*, IV, 133.

consider this more closely very shortly).

6. The last contrast in showing the superiority of Melchizedek over the Levites is that Levi is considered as having paid tithes when Abraham tithed to Melchizedek (vs. 9, 10). Levi was in the loins of Abraham in that he was descended from him; thus when Abraham tithed, Levi also tithed. By this means it is indicated that Melchizedek was superior to Levi and consequently he was better than Aaron. It also meant that Messiah was better than Aaron, for He belonged to a superior order of priesthood. According to Wuest, "this kind of reasoning would appeal to Jewish readers, for they emphasized strongly the solidarity of the Jewish race. The whole Jewish law, its ordinances and priesthood, it regarded as potentially in Abraham."¹

Thus we have examined the context in which verse 8 is set by noting that Melchizedek is presented as a type of Christ, who is seen as superior to the Levites because when they were still unborn, they were reckoned to be inferior to Melchizedek since Abraham recognized Melchizedek's superiority. This brings us to the analysis of the eighth verse in its relation to the tithe.

The Tithe in Heb. 7:8

This verse reads as follows: "And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them of whom it is witnessed that he liveth." Our problem is to discern if this verse contains instruction for tithing for the present day

¹ Wuest, op. cit., p. 131.

and if it therefore lends its support to what we have seen in I Cor. 9:13, 14. There are two natural divisions to the verse which we shall observe.

The Levitical Tithe. — In view of the contrast between the Levites and Melchizedek as already noted in this context, it is to be observed that the contrast is continued in this verse also. The contrast is between a succession of mortal priests who die and one who lives perpetually; that is, one “who never loses his personal claim, which is inherent in Himself.”¹

The word “here” undoubtedly refers to the Levitical system which was still in existence in the time of the author of the epistle and with which Hebrew people would be perfectly familiar.² The priests who were members of the Levitical system are described as “men that die.” Thus under the Mosaic Law, men who were subject to death and “who were actually seen to die from generation to generation enjoyed the rights of priests.”³ Therefore, men who passed away and gave place to successors were inferior to Melchizedek who as far as Scripture was concerned had no successor. Hence, the emphasis in the first part of the verse is upon dying men who occupy the office of the Levitical priests. But there is a second emphasis which is that these dying men also receive

¹ Barmby, op. cit., p. 185.

² Alford, op. cit., IV, 133; Marcus Dods, The Expositor's Greek Testament, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951), IV, 310.

³ Westcott, op. cit., p. 178.

tithes. Apparently the plural number of the tithe signifies the different tithes of the Mosaic system¹ as it was being practiced after the earthly ministry of Christ had closed. Thus it is seen that tithing was still being practiced by the Jews in the first century of the Christian era and Christians were familiar with that fact.

The Melchizedek Tithe.— Now that it has been noted that the Jews still were practicing tithing in the early days of the infant church, it is very natural to wonder if any similar teaching and practice became a part of Christian doctrine. Therefore, an analysis of the second half of this verse must be considered to see what it teaches. This portion of the verse reads as follows: “but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.”

1. The Greek in this part of the verse “is very condensed,”² therefore, the immediate context must be depended upon to supply that which is lacking. The section begins with “but there,” which is an obvious reference to Melchizedek in view of the contrast which the writer has been drawing between the Levites and Melchizedek. Dods points out that whereas the “and here” refers to the very familiar Levitical system, so the “but there” is “that system identified with that ancient priest,”³ which is associated with Melchizedek. In a similar way Westcott declares the “and here” refers to

¹ Alford, op. cit., IV, 134.

² Marvin R. Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1905), IV, 458.

³ Dods, op. cit., p. 310.

the system which is seen, while the “but there” refers to the remote and solitary example of Melchizedek. He continues by saying:

The ὡς refers to that Levitical priesthood which was nearer to the writer’s experience than Melchizedek, though the latter is the immediately preceding subject.¹

Lünemann concurs in understanding that the phrase “but there” refers

to Melchisedec, because the Levitical priesthood still continues to exist to the time of our author, thus having something about it near and present; the historic appearing of Melchisedec, on the other hand, falls in the period of hoary antiquity.²

2. The words “he receiveth them” are not found in the original text, but from the context they are understood as necessary to balance the construction of the first part of the verse. An ellipsis has taken place and the translator must supply that which is missing on the basis of the context.³ In explaining an ellipsis which involves a verb, Robertson says “usually the context makes clear what verb is wanting, as in Mt. 27:25; Ac. 18:6; Rom. 4:9; 5:18; 2 Cor. 9:7; Gal. 2:9; Rev. 1:4.”⁴ Vincent calls attention to this ellipsis by stating that “the A. V. fills it out correctly.”⁵

¹ Westcott, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

² Götthlieb Lünemann, *Critical and Exegetical Hand-book to the Epistle to the Hebrews*, in *Meyer’s Commentary on the New Testament*, trans. Maurice J. Evans (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, Publishers, 1885), p. 563.

³ Buttmann, *op. cit.*, p. 391.

⁴ A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (4th. ed., New York: George H. Doran Company, 1923), p. 1202.

⁵ Vincent, *op. cit.*, p. 458.

In the first part of the verse the verb is λαμβάνουσιν which is the present indicative active, meaning, “they receive.” Therefore, that which is to be supplied by the translator apparently must be in the present tense, also. Hence, the sensible translation is, “he receiveth them.” This, then, says that Melchizedek also was receiving tithes just as the Levites were receiving them at the time of the writing of the Hebrew epistle. The significance of the present tense is seen in verse 9 where both present and perfect tenses are used. In that verse the present active participle λαμβάνων (who receiveth) speaks of the practice of the Levites in the day of the Hebrew epistle, while the perfect indicative passive, δεδεκάτωται (both paid tithes), shows that Levi has shared passively (in the past) the consequences of Abraham’s act of tithing. Thus Levi, who was receiving tithes, also shared in the results of what Abraham had done. That in which Levi shared was an action completed in the past as shown by the perfect tense, for the perfect is the tense of completed action. Furthermore, “the point of completion is always antecedent to the time implied or stated in connection with the use of the perfect.”¹ Hence in verse 9, Levi shared in the past the consequence of Abraham’s tithing, but in the early days of the Christian church, he (through the Levites) was receiving tithes from the people of Israel according to the Mosaic system.

Now as we return to verse 8 and note that the present

¹ Dana and Mantey, op. cit., p. 200.

tense is used twice, it is seen that the Levites were receiving tithes at the time of the writing of the Hebrews epistle and in some similar way Melchizedek also was receiving tithes. But if the reference to Melchizedek means something already completed, then the perfect tense should have been used and not the present. Hence, since the Levites were receiving tithes from the Jews, then Melchizedek must be considered as receiving tithes from a totally different group of people. Furthermore, since Melchizedek was the priest of the Most High God (Gen. 14:18), it would be expected that he would tithe only the Lord's people. Therefore, the only other possible group of whom it could be said that he received tithes in the day of this Hebrews epistle would be the Christians. Thus, here is a strong indication that Christians were tithing along with the Jews in the first century of the Christian era. In writing concerning the Epistle to the Hebrews, Simpson says:

While this was written primarily to prove the greatness of Christ, by undesigned coincidence it states an historical fact. When the Book of Hebrews was written, the tithe was being paid in the Christian Church . . .¹

Thus this author seems to have fathomed the implication of the structure of this verse as it pertains to Christians.

We now move on to consider the last phrase of the verse.

3. When the writer of this epistle says, "of whom it is witnessed that he liveth," he is still referring to Melchizedek. This description of Melchizedek is in direct

¹ John E. Simpson, Faithful Also In Much (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1942), p. 93.

contrast to the “dying men” referred to in the first part of the verse. But how can this be said of Melchizedek, for obviously it is to him and not Christ that these words apply? Does it imply that he was more than mortal? No, for the writer appeals to a “witness” as indicated in his use of the present passive participle, *Μαρτυρούμενος*, which may be translated, “being attested,”¹ or “being witnessed,”² or “one to whom witness is borne.”³ The witness appealed to must be that of Scripture, for it nowhere bears witness to him being more than mortal. But this “witness” is a resumption of what was said in verse 3 and bears the same meaning as that in Genesis where he passes before our view with no mention of his birth, ancestry, or death. Thus he is the ideal priest continually and “of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.” The word for “liveth” is ζῇ, and it is the present active indicative thus expressing that which is true, now. That is, according to the record he is not dead officially as other priests die who are made after the order of Aaron, but he lives.⁴ Dods points out that so far as the record of Scripture is concerned Melchizedek had no successor and this witness that he lives gives to the silence of Scripture the force of a direct assertion.⁵ Westcott also writes as follows:

¹ Vincent, *op. cit.*, p. 458.

² Archibald Thomas Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1931), V, 382.

³ Westcott, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

⁴ Wordsworth, *op. cit.*, pp. 401, 402.

⁵ Dods, *op. cit.*, p. 310.

The writer recurring to the exact form of the record in Genesis, on which he has dwelt before (v. 3), emphasizes the fact that Melchizedek appears there simply in the power of life. So far he does not die; the witness of Scripture is to his living. What he does is in virtue of what he is.¹

The necessity of silence concerning the death of Melchizedek is explained forcefully by Lindsay as follows:

God's purpose in this studied silence of the record was, that, appearing and known only as a living priest, he might be a type of Him who literally is a priest for ever, and ever liveth to make intercession. The eternity of Christ's priesthood could not, in the nature of things, be typified by another priesthood literally; and therefore it was necessary, if it was to be typified at all, that some kind of similitude of it should be contrived. Such a similitude we find in the priesthood of Melchizedek.²

Thus Scripture has set the Levitical priests in contrast to Melchizedek as those who were dying men while he "abideth a priest continually." Therefore, the Scripture testifies by its silence concerning his death that he still lives; that his office as priest does not pass on to another; and that "he is still receiving tithes."³ Calvin also adds his voice to this testimony of the perpetuity of Melchizedek's ministry in receiving tithes — that this function never ceases — in these words:

Tithes were paid to the Levites only for a time, because they did not live; but that Melchisedec, because he is

¹ Westcott, op. cit., p. 178.

² William Lindsay, Lectures on the Epistle to the Hebrews (Philadelphia: Smith, English, and Co., 1867), I, 339.

³ Wuest, op. cit., p. 131.

immortal, retains even to the end what was once given to him by God.¹

Weiss further declares this same idea:

But if the Levitical priests who receive the tenth have a right to this only during their lifetime, whereas he, of whom the Scriptures declare that his life had no end, has this for all times.²

4. The use of the words “tithe” and “tithes” in this context should not be overlooked. In verses 2 and 4, the singular number of the word is found, while the plural is used in verses 6, 8, and 9. Westcott suggests that the plural is distinguished from the singular to express the repeated tithings under the Mosaic system because in verses 2 and 4 the reference is to the one special act of Abraham.³ In the main this would be true, but it is to be questioned if the plural use with reference to Melchizedek would refer to the Mosaic system. We have no record that there were various types of tithes (as the three under the Law) in Melchizedek’s day, and neither do we have a record that Abraham tithed more than once. But the use of the plural (vs. 8, 9) at least is suggestive that Melchizedek was accustomed to receive tithes and very probably from other people in addition to Abraham. In that connection, the plural word even could imply that Abraham tithed more times than has been recorded

¹ John Calvin, Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews, trans. John Owen (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1948), p. 163.

² Bernhard Weiss, A Commentary on the New Testament, trans. George H. Schodde and Epiphanius Wilson (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1906), IV, 176.

³ Westcott, op. cit., p. 178.

(of. v. 6). But the obvious point is that Melchizedek had been accustomed to receiving “tithes” and that his experience was not limited to the one incident involving Abraham.

Therefore, what we have found in this verse thus far is that in the day when the Epistle to the Hebrews was written the Levites still were receiving tithes from the Jews, and Melchizedek also in some undisclosed way was receiving tithes since he is the one “of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.” Furthermore, it has been noted that as far as the record is concerned Melchizedek never died; thus it is that he was a type of Christ in the fact that he liveth and that he was “made [sic] like unto the Son of God” (v. 3). Therefore, it is said of him that he “abideth a priest continually” (v. 3) as far as the office is concerned. The area of his typology is that as priest he never died — this must be true of him if he is to be a type of the eternally existing Christ, for the area of typology must be in the similarities between type and antitype rather than their dissimilarities.¹ Hence, thus far in the verse under consideration the undying Melchizedek is reckoned as still receiving tithes. The only possible people of whom it could be said that he receives them would be the Christians, for the verse states that the Levites were receiving tithes also (and that could be only from the Jews). But we must examine still further some of the things presented in the Epistle to the Hebrews before we can understand better the relation of the tithe to Melchizedek and also how

¹ Cf. Ramm, op. cit., pp. 145, 145.

it is related to our day through verse eight.

The Relation of Christ to Melchizedek

In Heb. 7:1-10 it was seen, (1) that Melchizedek was a type of Christ in that he was “made like unto the Son of God” (v. 3), and (2) that his priesthood was greater than that of the Levitical since Levi was reckoned as having tithed in and through Abraham. The principle that the less was blessed by the greater (v. 7) was thus demonstrated through Abraham’s tithe and Melchizedek’s consequent blessing. These things point up how great Melchizedek was (v. 4) as one, who according to the record, receives tithes, now, and “of whom it is witnessed that he lives” (v. 8). The rest of this chapter continues to show how great Melchizedek is and that his priesthood has superseded that of the Levitical system. Thus in verses 11 to 28, the relation of Christ to Melchizedek and his priesthood is set forth.

The Levitical Priesthood has been changed (vs. 11-14). – In verse 11 the writer, by means of a question, points out the fact, logically, that the imperfection of the Law has been demonstrated by virtue of another priest rising after the order of Melchizedek rather than after the Aaronic order. This change, it is further reasoned, served notice that the Law also has been changed (v. 12); thus the reader is left with the obvious conclusion that the Law was only temporary in God’s plan. Then the author identifies this new priest as being our Lord (vs. 13, 14) and reminds the reader that under the Law, Christ never could have functioned as a priest

because He was of the tribe of Judah which tribe had no place in the Mosaic priestly service.

Christ is a priest in the Melchizedek order (vs. 15-28). – Previously Melchizedek has been spoken of as a type of Christ since he was “made like unto the Son of God” (v. 3), and starting with verse 15, Christ’s likeness to Melchizedek is disclosed. But this is to be expected since He is declared to be a priest after the order of Melchizedek, for to be such a priest there must be some likeness of some kind.

1. Christ as priest is said to be “after the similitude of Melchizedek” (v. 15). The author introduces this statement by saying “and it is yet far more evident” which Westcott translates, “And what we say is yet more abundantly evident.”¹ It is not clear to every one what the author described as “far more evident,” for it seemingly could refer either to the abrogation of the Law, or to the inefficacy of the Levitical priesthood, or even to both. The latter possibility seems to be more likely with the abrogation of the Law being secondary to the weakness of the priesthood, for the dominant thought throughout the context is in connection with Christ’s work.² Hence, the new proof is directed to the unsatisfactory character of the Levitical priesthood and the writer says that it is perfectly obvious that a new kind of priest should arise after the likeness of Melchizedek.

The word, “similitude,” is *ὁμοιότητα* which

¹ Westcott, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

² Westcott, *op. cit.*, p. 183; cf. Vincent, *op. cit.*, p. 461; Wuest, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

means “likeness” and since it is used here in association with *κατὰ* the meaning is “after the likeness.”¹ The only other use of this word in the New Testament is in Heb. 4:15 where the meaning is “in like manner.”² Vincent notes that this emphasized “the personal resemblance to Melchisedec”³ and Westcott says “the idea of ‘order’ is specialised into that of likeness. Melchizedek furnishes, so to speak, the personal as well as the official type of the new High-priest.”⁴ Thus Christ is seen to be like Melchizedek in his priesthood and this brings out more sharply the difference between the new and the old priesthood. Thus the author is saying that as a priest Christ functions in the same way as Melchizedek, since both are in the same order of priesthood. Whatever responsibilities Melchizedek has as a priest, Christ has in the same likeness. When this fact is properly seen in its relation to Christ’s priestly ministry, it becomes obvious that here is a vital passage for the subject of the scriptural tithe.

This is seen to be so in the light of verse 8 in which the first part of the verse apparently refers to the Levites still receiving tithes in the day when the Hebrews epistle was written, while the latter part of the verse in a similar manner indicates that Melchizedek, in some fashion

¹ Thayer, *op. cit.*, p. 445.

² *Ibid.*

³ Vincent, *op. cit.*, p. 461.

⁴ Westcott, *op. cit.*, pp. 183, 184.

not stated, also was receiving tithes in that day. It should be noted that this function of receiving tithes is the only ministry which the Bible reveals concerning Melchizedek, for nowhere is he described as offering sacrifices of any kind. Something of the meaning of this becomes apparent when it is seen that Christ is a priest after the likeness of Melchizedek (v. 15), for since He is of that order of priesthood, then He must of necessity take over the same functions as Melchizedek observed. That is, it must be recognized that Christ's priesthood is exactly like Melchizedek's and whatever responsibilities belong to that priesthood fully inhere also in Christ's priesthood. Hence the similitude is in the likeness of the priestly office and work. Therefore, since we know that Melchizedek as God's priest received tithes, then it must follow that Christ as the Melchizedek priest, today, is to receive tithes in like manner.

Furthermore it has been noted that since the Levitical tithe is in view in the first half of verse 8, then that tithe would be received from the Jews. Hence it was observed that since Melchizedek is receiving tithes now, there is only one logical group which could be involved. That group would have to be the Christians who are the believers of today and who would thus correspond to believing Abraham in his day. Therefore, the literalness of Scripture and the force of logic apparently require that we recognize a part of Christ's priestly ministry today is to receive the tithes from God's people. Since the type in verse 8 is receiving tithes, then the antitype who is "after the similitude of Melchizedek"

(v. 15) must fulfill the type. Thus is seen somewhat the importance of the statement that Christ is “after the similitude of Melchizedek.”

2. Christ has a never ending priesthood. The author takes great pains to emphasize the perpetual nature of Christ’s priestly ministry by carefully choosing his words with which to portray this truth. In verse 16, he contrasts Christ’s priesthood with the Levitical by saying that it was not of that which pertained to the physical body, as in the case of the Levitical priests who were of the Aaronic family, but it was “after the power of an endless life.” The word for “endless” is full of meaning, for in the original it is *ἀκατάλυτου*, which is formed from *λύω*, “to loose,” alpha privative, and *κατά*, “down.” Thus the compound word means “incapable of dissolution, indissoluble, not subject to destruction,” hence “enduring” and “everlasting.” Therefore, the word describes the Messiah as constituted a priest according to the power of an indissoluble life. As priest He lives on forever.

Furthermore, He is “a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec” (vs. 17, 21). This is the testimony according to prophecy which describes the indestructible character of the priest who should come as portrayed by the Psalmist in 110:4. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, inspired by the Holy Spirit, has given us the Divine commentary on this prophecy by applying it to Christ. Therefore, Christ unavoidably must be a priest after the order of Melchizedek and He must eternally be such, or else prophecy is undependable.

The word for “for ever” is *αἰῶνα* and it means “without end, never to cease, everlasting.” It should be noted also that the perpetuity of His priesthood is guaranteed by the oath of God (vs. 20, 21).

Christ’s priesthood is also said to be “unchangeable” (v. 24). This word *ἀπαράβατον* is composed of *βαίνω* “to step,” plus alpha privative, and *παρά*, “across.” Thus it means “not stepping across” and it therefore “describes that which cannot be violated, or that which does not pass over to another.”¹ By this means, the author has said that the priestly ministry of Christ is such that no other person can take it—it cannot be transferred to another under any circumstance. The closing verse (28) also says that Christ is “consecrated” a priest “forevermore” (*αἰῶνα*).

Therefore, it is manifest that the author of the Hebrews epistle is teaching that Christ’s priesthood is eternal and never ending and that whatever responsibilities inhere in the office of the Melchizedek priest will be fulfilled by Christ for ever.

Summary

In the light of this analysis of chapter 7, the setting or context for verse 8 has been established and the tithe is seen in its relation to our day. We have followed the literalness of Scripture except where it was apparent that typology is involved, and then in dealing with the type

¹ Wuest, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

we have followed the recognized procedure of interpretation. We have allowed the type to be interpreted on the basis of the similarities to the antitype and to omit the dissimilarities. Consequently, the literal and the typological approach have yielded a further fact in the development of the subject of the tithe.

In verses 1-3 Melchizedek is seen as a type of Christ and especially in the area of Christ's Deity and eternity. This is seen in that Melchizedek is spoken of as though he had never been born or had never died. Thus it is declared of him that he was "made like unto the Son of God" and that he "abideth a priest continually" (v. 3). Later in the chapter (vs. 17, 21) it is shown that Christ is a priest forever in the fulfillment of prophecy (Psa. 110:4) and that His priesthood is "after the similitude of Melchisedec" (v. 15). Hence, the writer is saying that Christ is the same kind of priest that Melchizedek was and that He would minister in that office in all the duties and functions which were related to it, even as Melchizedek had done. As Melchizedek was said to "abide a priest continually" (v. 3) even so Christ is a priest made "after the power of an indissoluble life" (v. 16); thus He is said to have "an unchangeable priesthood" (v. 24). Therefore, it is seen how carefully the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews has shown the antitype to fulfill the conditions of the type.

This emphasis upon the type and antitype has great bearing upon the implication of verse 8. In the immediate context of this verse the author has shown that the Melchizedekian

priesthood is superior to the Levitical in that God considers that Levi tithed to Melchizedek through Abraham; and that in Melchizedek's blessing of Abraham the lesser was blessed by the greater (v. 7). Furthermore, the author shows that the Levitical priesthood was only temporary as demonstrated by the reestablishing of the ancient Melchizedekian order (vs. 11-14). Since all of these facts are designed to show that the Melchizedekian priesthood has superseded the Levitical, then it is manifest that this is the order of priesthood today with Christ as the priest. Therefore, since Christ is the priest after the order of Melchizedek, verse 8 takes on meaning for us.

In verse 8 it is shown that the Levitical priests still were receiving tithes at the time of the writing of the Hebrews Epistle even though their priesthood had been Superseded by that of Melchizedek. But furthermore, the verse shows that in some way the Melchizedekian priest also is receiving tithes today. This can be explained only on the ground of the typology involved. Since Christ is the antitype of the Melchizedekian priesthood, then He in reality is the One to whom tithes are to be paid, for He must perform the functions of His priestly office. Melchizedek received tithes from believing Abraham; hence his antitype, Christ, must receive them from the believers in His day. Such reasoning compels us to observe that apparently one phase of Christ's ministry today is to receive tithes from Christians who correspond to Abraham who was symbolic of believers in his day. In view of such considerations it is to be noted

how this passage supports what we have observed previously concerning I Cor. 9:13, 14. Here, then, seems to be a justifiable basis for recognizing that the New Testament as well as the Old teaches tithing.

The Ministry of "gifts and sacrifices"

Before we complete our study of the New Testament passages there is one other subject which needs consideration because of its apparent bearing on the subject of the New Testament tithe. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews states three times that the High Priest has a two-fold ministry which includes the offering of, (1) "gifts," and (2) "sacrifices." In 5:1 he says: "for every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins." Then in discussing Christ as High Priest after the order of Melchizedek he declares that Christ must have the same type of ministry: "for every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore, it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer" (8:3). The third reference to this two-fold ministry explains it as a part of the Temple ministry which was a figure of things yet to come: "Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience" (9:9). In view of these statements, it is necessary that we consider the significance of the two words "gifts" and "sacrifices."

The Words “Gifts” and “Sacrifices”

At the outset of our study of this two-fold ministry it is recognized that since the Holy Spirit is the real author of Scripture, He did not multiply words in order to have something to say. But rather He chose the word which exactly fitted the need in each instance. Therefore, in this circumstance it would seem that we are required to note that the two words hardly can be expected to refer to the same things. We can anticipate that very likely they speak of two different things in the priest’s ministry. Therefore, we shall examine them to see what distinction may be observed.

The word “gifts”. – In the original this word is “δῶρα” and it is used nineteen times in the New Testament,¹ but only in one instance (Lk. 21:4) is it not translated “gift.” In that one use it is translated “offerings.” The word means “gift, present” and in the Septuagint it is generally used for קָרָבָן; often, however, it is used for מִנְחָה and שֶׁחָד.² Thus its meaning is not primarily sacrifice, but “gift,” or “present.” The almost universal use of the word in the New Testament may be illustrated by the “gifts: gold, and frankincense, and myrrh” (Mt. 2:11) which the wise men presented to the infant Jesus. Furthermore, we read of the people “casting their gifts into the treasury” (Lk. 21:1) and that in the Tribulation time people

¹Englishman’s Greek Concordance, p. 170.

² Thayer, op. cit., p. 161.

“shall sent gifts one to another” (Rev. 11:10) as they rejoice over the death of the Lord’s “two witnesses.” Thus the normal or usual use of the word refers to some type of a gift or present rather than a sacrifice. We have seen previously that both Melchizedek and the Levites received tithes from Abraham and the Jews respectively and that the tithe is described as in the realm of a gift rather than a sacrifice. Thus this word easily could be used to describe the priestly ministry of receiving tithes and especially when it is compared with the word for “sacrifice.”

The word “sacrifices.” – This is an entirely different word than the preceding, for in the Greek it is *Θυσία* which means “a sacrifice or victim” and in the Septuagint it is used for *זֶבַח* and *מִנְחָה*.¹ The distinction between these two Hebrew words was studied previously when we considered the offerings of Cain and Abel. There it was noted that *זֶבַח* is the usual word for “sacrifice for slaughter” while *מִנְחָה* is a general term for “gift” or “tribute,”[sic] but occasionally it is used of a blood sacrifice. However, in such cases the context clearly reveals that that is the intended meaning. Therefore, since *Θυσία* is used for *זֶבַח*, which is definitely the word for blood sacrifice, its usual meaning of “a sacrifice,” or “victim” manifests *Θυσία* to be different than the first word, “*δῶρα*.” Hence the use of these two words in the Hebrews Epistle apparently indicates

¹ Thayer, op. cit., p. 294.

that a difference is intended.

Christ's Priestly Ministry

In Heb. 8:3 it is declared that "every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices" and because Christ is a high priest He also must function in that capacity. Lenski declares that "if any high priest, including Jesus, has no offering to bring to God he is no high priest. To bring an offering is the very object (εἰς τὸ) of his appointment to his office."¹ Here, then, is revealed the fact of Christ's two-fold priestly ministry. As the priest who is today after the order of the Melchizedekian priesthood, Christ fulfills the two-fold ministry of offering "both gifts and sacrifices" (9:9). Let us see how He fulfills His ministry.

His sacrifice. — The Levitical priests presented the animal sacrifices for sin in the Temple, but since Christ is not of the tribe of Levi He was barred from such service. However, Christ's ministry is in the "greater and more perfect tabernacle" (Heb. 9:11) which is in "heaven itself" (Heb. 9:24); thus He has a better place than the temporary earthly tabernacle in which to minister. Furthermore, since it is impossible "that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins" (Heb. 10:4), Christ "has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb. 9:24). He has accomplished this by presenting His own blood in the holy place (Heb. 9:12) in "heaven itself" (Heb. 9:24) once for all and

¹ R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Epistle of James (Columbus: Wartburg Press, 1946), p. 254.

never more to be repeated (Heb. 7:27; 10:10, 12, 14). Therefore, Christ as priest has offered the perfect sacrifice and fulfilled that part of His priestly responsibility.

His gifts. — As noted before, the word “gifts” easily could refer to the tithes which the priests received from the people inasmuch as the gifts very probably were different than the sacrifices. Therefore, since Christ is a priest after the order of Melchizedek and since one function of the Melchizedekian priesthood is to receive tithes, it must be expected that Christ likewise should receive them. This ministry seems to be accomplished in that Christ is the antitype of Melchizedek who apparently is receiving tithes in 7:8. By that means, then, if the “gifts” in 8:3 refer to tithes, in fulfilling His office Christ is receiving the gifts which are tithes by virtue of the fact that He fulfills the Melchizedekian type. Thus it is that Christ is not only a high priest, but He is serving in the two-fold priestly ministry: He has offered Himself as the one perfect eternal sacrifice and He is receiving tithes from His people, the believers of today.

In view of this two-fold priestly ministry of Christ's, we pause to note its connection with the rest of Scripture. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews has stated that “every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices” (8:3; cf. also 5:1) and in view of this statement it would seem that this is descriptive of the normal ministry to be expected of high priests irrespective of the particular age in which they minister. Hence it is to be anticipated that

even in the days of antiquity worship should follow this two-fold pattern of “gifts” and “sacrifices.”

This two-fold procedure was observed when we considered the days antedating the Mosaic Law. It was noted that the heathen religions followed this practice from the earliest times of which we have records. Furthermore, Scripture suggests that this was the Divine pattern from the beginning; for Cain and Abel apparently brought “gifts” to the Lord rather than “sacrifices” as recorded in Gen. 4:3, 4, while Noah sacrificed burnt offerings before the Lord after the flood (Gen. 8:20). Later Abraham offered both “gifts” and “sacrifices” to the Lord when he gave tithes to Melchizedek (Gen. 14:20) and was about to sacrifice Isaac as a burnt offering (Gen. 22:2). These acts of worship strongly infer that the offerers had some knowledge concerning such procedures which would imply an early revelation or revelations containing the necessary instructions. This implication is supported in Abraham’s case when God said “that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws” (Gen. 26:5). Hence it seems proper to conclude that Abraham’s acts of worship were in conformity to Divine instruction. This same two-fold form of worship is the well known procedure under the Mosaic Covenant: “tithes” (gifts) and “sacrifices” — this is the same pattern which is outlined for the ministry of Christ as the priest after the order of Melchizedek.

Therefore, since Christ is the Melchizedekian priest today, and since He is expected to have the two-fold ministry

of a high priest, it is proper to ask in what way He fulfills the office? The only satisfactory scriptural answer is that His death on the Cross is His sacrifice and also since He is the antitype of the type, Melchizedek, He is the receiver of the tithes attributed to Melchizedek in Heb. 7:8. In this manner His two-fold ministry is identified and it is seen to fit exactly the pattern of Scripture from the very beginning. Thus the unity of Scripture in this respect is nicely observed.

Conclusion

Since the practice of tithing is of such great antiquity and was practiced almost universally by the heathen as well as by the Lord's faithful followers up until the time of the Cross of Calvary, it is quite natural for believers since the Cross to ask if such a practice is to be observed today. The answer to that inquiry can be found only in the New Testament revelation and the sum of our study of that revelation has been such as to show that although there is no specific statement which declares the tithe principle for today, yet there are passages which, when carefully analyzed, strongly indicate that apparently the ancient principle is intended to be operative in this day of grace.

It has been seen that when the Lord was performing His earthly ministry as a prophet He sanctioned and supported the tithe for the nation of Israel (Mt. 23:23). Of course it is recognized that this preceded the Cross and hence was still associated with the keeping of the Mosaic Law. But it is significant to note that our Lord sanctioned the tithe at

this point and gave no hint that the ancient principle was to cease suddenly with the Cross. It could almost be inferred that the practice was to continue. However, it is recognized that a more substantial basis is needed upon which to establish the principle of the tithe for today. Just such a basis seems to have been provided in the two Scripture passages of I Cor. 9:13, 14 and Heb. 7:8 when analyzed in the light of their contexts.

It has been seen that Paul in the Corinthian passage deliberately has established the principle that the Christian worker should be supported by those to whom he ministers. Furthermore he seems to have pointed out the method by which this support should be forthcoming. True, he does not name the tithe as that method, but a fair analysis of the passage certainly seems to indicate that he had just such a plan in mind. In verse 13 the tithe certainly is in view, for it was the basic means by which the Levites and the priests of the Temple lived. Paul is simply reminding his readers that they know this fundamental fact of the Temple arrangement.

Therefore, in verse 14 he makes his analogy and draws his conclusion in the light of the tithing procedure of the previous verse. Based upon the Temple procedure he then says, "even so hath the Lord ordained" etc. (v. 14), that the Christian worker is to be supported because of his Gospel ministry. The words "even so" (*οὕτως καὶ*), were seen to be adverbs which could be properly translated "in the same way also," thus indicating that the same method of the tithe was to be followed today for the support of the Lord's servants

even as it had been done previously for the Levites and priests. Here is a truth not revealed on the surface of Scripture, but one which apparently was intended to be discovered through a diligent study of the Word of God.

Furthermore, we have seen that the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews does speak of the tithe in the context of his matchless presentation of the Melchizedekian priesthood of our Lord in fulfillment of the typology associated with Melchizedek. Against this background of rich typology the writer says that “here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them of whom it is witnessed that he liveth” (Heb. 7:8). It is very apparent that the Levites are referred to in the first half of the verse, while Melchizedek is in view in the latter part of the verse. Thus, at the time of the writing of the Hebrews epistle the Jewish people were still paying tithes to the Levites and priests while at the same time the writer declares that Melchizedek also was receiving tithes. It is not difficult to understand the meaning of the reference to the Levitical tithes, but how can it be said that Melchizedek receives tithes today? The solution was seen to be in the realm of type and antitype. As high priest, Melchizedek is the type of Christ who ever liveth and never dies. Therefore, since the priesthood of Melchizedek never ends it is seen that when Christ became a high priest after the ancient order, He likewise receives tithes as a part of His priestly ministry according to the practice of Melchizedek.

That Christ apparently receives tithes today is

further supported by the two-fold ministry of every high priest. The writer of the Hebrew epistle declares three times that every high priest offers two things to God: “gifts and sacrifices” (5:13 8:3; 9:9). Therefore, since Christ is the true high priest, He also must fulfill the same two-fold ministry. It is clear that He has offered Himself as the one perfect sacrifice and thus one part of His priestly ministry has been perfectly fulfilled. The second part of His priestly ministry may be seen in the reception of tithes today from believers, for tithes in Scripture are accounted as gifts and not sacrifices.

Therefore, it is seen that there is a plausible scriptural basis for understanding that believers in the day of grace are to tithe even as did their predecessors before the Cross. Thus it appears that in the realm of giving the Lord has one basic plan for all ages, the tithe.¹ In the light of this apparent New Testament teaching it is necessary to consider how all of this affects the Christian. We shall consider this in the next chapter.

¹ Someone may ask, “In advocating tithing today are you not in agreement with the Seventh Day Adventists?” No, for what we have studied is based upon New Testament teaching. The Adventist position is established upon the Mosaic Law. Thus there is a very fundamental difference between the two views. For a more extended discussion of the Adventist teaching see Appendix D.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CHRISTIAN AND THE TITHE

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It is very commonly reasoned that since believers are under Grace they ought to give at least as much as the Old Testament saints even though the tithe is not specifically designated in the New Testament. That is valid logic if tithing is not found in the New Testament, but as has been noted in the previous chapter there is a plausible scriptural basis upon which to establish the practice of tithing today. Thus in the light of this two-fold approach to the subject it is necessary to consider how all of this affects the Christian; hence in this chapter we shall consider the Christian and the tithe.

The Nature Of The Tithe

One major argument is continually advanced by those who reject tithing as a principle to be practiced during the Church Age. The contention is that tithing is a legal principle and therefore, it can have no place in the believer's life while Grace is operative. If tithing is always a legal principle as claimed, then the argument would be valid, but is tithing necessarily a legal principle under every situation? The answer will be determined by considering what the nature of the tithe really is. Thus it will be necessary to

analyze the tithe as it is found throughout Scripture in its relation to Abraham, the Law, and Grace.

Tithing in Relation to Abraham

It was by faith. – It is readily recognized by students of the Bible that the patriarch Abraham lived his life on the basis of grace and faith. The writer of the Hebrews epistle describes Abraham as a man who walked by faith with God (Heb. 11:8-19) even to the extent of being willing to sacrifice his only heir, Isaac (v. 17). The Apostle Paul in Romans 4 presents him as the great and striking example from all previous history of how men are saved by faith and not by works when he wrote: “Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness” (v. 3). Thus the Scripture is clear at this point that Abraham did not attempt to do anything in order to merit righteousness, but rather that he obediently by faith obeyed God’s word and accordingly was declared righteous.

Previously in our study it was noted that faith presupposes a revelation of some kind which is believed and accordingly acted upon. Thus faith obeys God’s word and that is precisely what Abraham did, with the result that he was declared righteous. It must be noted that although Abraham obeyed God (Heb. 11:8) there is no hint that his obedience made his act to be legalism rather than grace. The Scripture is plain that under his circumstance his obedience was that of faith. In other words it was an indication of his loving trustfulness of God and of his willingness to do the things

which God desired just because God had said that it was so. This is vastly different from the ground of legalism, which is comprised of works¹ and under such conditions obedience is rendered because there is a penalty for disobedience. Thus fear of punishment becomes the motive for the obedient life under legalism, while complete confidence in God's word is the motive for obedience when faith is operative. This marked contrast is forcefully seen when the priests of the Mosaic Law are warned to keep the charge lest they die (Lev. 8:35); but nowhere is Abraham instructed to do something under threat of punishment in the event of failure. Thus it is evident that Abraham lived under conditions in which grace operated rather than a legal system. Therefore, in view of these considerations it certainly cannot be successfully maintained that tithing is always a legal principle, for as a man of faith Abraham practiced tithing.

Furthermore, then, it should be noted that with a heart of faith such as Abraham had, he would react in some way toward God by showing his appreciation for the victory which had been accorded him. Therefore, out of the fullness of his heart and in gratitude toward God he gave to the Lord a tithe of the spoils after Melchizedek had given him his

¹ It is not to be construed that the Christian is not to perform good works, for the very opposite is true. The New Testament specifically declares that the Christian's life should show forth good works because he is saved (cf. Gal. 5:22, 23; Eph. 2:10; Titus 2:14; 3:1; Jas. 2:17, 18). Thus the motive is different than that of fear of punishment for violated laws which dominated the legal system.

priestly blessing (Gen. 14:19, 20). We read of no compulsion, such as a legal system would have required, but apparently he did that which he had been accustomed to do upon previous occasions and which he had done by faith in obedience to God's voice (Gen. 26:5). That Abraham apparently did not tithe only once is indicated by the Divine Commentator when He says that Levi "payed tithes in Abraham" (Heb. 7:9). Therefore, we are not to understand that Genesis 14 is merely an isolated incident in the life of Abraham, but it is simply the only recorded act of Abraham's practice of tithing in conformity with his life of grace and faith. He apparently was in the habit of tithing to Melchizedek as priest of the Most High God.

It was the highest order of tithing. — When tithing is considered to be legalism, and nothing else, such a view loses sight of the kind or quality of tithe which Abraham practiced, for such an attitude takes a low view of his act.

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews logically and carefully argues that the Melchizedekian priesthood is higher than the Levitical since Levi was reckoned to have paid tithes through Abraham (Heb. 7:9), for being yet in the loins of Abraham (v. 10) he, as the less, was blessed of the better (v. 7). Furthermore, the argument is developed by showing that with the reestablishing of the ancient Melchizedekian priesthood the insufficiency of the Levitical priesthood has been completely demonstrated. Since this is God's attitude toward the Levitical priesthood, then its ministry can be no more permanent than the priests who functioned

under it.

Therefore, that being the case, the Levitical tithes were just as temporary as the system which produced them. Hence the Levitical tithes are set in contrast to the tithes received by the Melchizedekian priesthood and it is seen that they are of a lower order than those offered by Abraham. Therefore, Abraham's tithing must be considered of the highest order of which we have any record and especially must it be recognized as higher than that which was practiced by the Jewish nation. Since the priesthood of Melchizedek is perpetual, as also its ministry, then it must follow that the tithe is likewise perpetual.¹

Here, then, is a substantial reason why tithing for today may not be based upon the Mosaic system, but rather its basis must be upon something more enduring. Therefore, the full teaching of Scripture must be considered and the permanent nature of Melchizedek's ancient priesthood together with its ministry cannot be ignored. Thus the tithing of Abraham becomes highly significant in determining the status of the tithe for today.

Tithing In Relation To The Law

Since the tithing which Abraham practiced was not a legalistic principle, neither was it a part of a legal system, we now move on to note the relation of the tithing principle to the Mosaic Law. In considering this phase of our subject

¹ Charles A. Cook, Stewardship and Missions (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1908), pp. 124, 125.

it is manifest to all who study the Bible that tithing was a part of the Mosaic Law, so there really is no great problem; nonetheless it is essential that it be clearly understood what is basically involved in the Law.

The Law was a rule of life. — The Law was given to the nation of Israel (Ex. 19:3) and by that action that nation came “under the law.” Scripture clearly points out that being “under the law” did not mean that it was a way of salvation, for Paul writes: “by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight” (Rom. 3:20). Therefore, as McClain states it, “with this possibility excluded, there is left only one possible alternative: ‘Under the law’ for these Old Testament people meant that they were under it as a rule of life.”¹ The same author further says:

The dispensational change from the age of the law to the age of grace does not mean that formerly sinners were saved by deeds of law whereas today they are saved by grace, for we have already seen that men could not be saved by law in any age! But it does mean that God’s people in the former age were “under the law” as a rule of life, whereas today they are not “under the law” as a rule of life.²

As a system or rule of life, the Law required that those under it should keep it in its every detail, for the Apostle Paul writes: “Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them” (Gal. 3:10). Furthermore, a Jew did not dare to fail at just one point no matter how insignificant it seemed to be:

¹ McClain, op. cit., p. 33

²Ibid.

“For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all” (Jas. 2:10). Thus the unity of the Law is revealed while at the same time it is unquestionably true that the Law is comprised of three elements – the moral, ceremonial, and civil. These are not three laws, but three elements of one law system and this unity Paul maintains when he says: “For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is debtor to do the whole law” (Gal. 5:3). In discussing the unity of the Law, Martin declares that,

Certainly, the law has moral and ceremonial aspects, but these are only aspects, not separate codes or units. They are parts of one law which “was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ that we might be justified by faith” (Gal. 3:24).

The Apostle Paul was most certainly an authority on the law as a unit under the Old Covenant. And yet it is he who fearlessly declared: . . . “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. . . . Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law: you are fallen from grace” (Gal. 5:1, 4).¹

Furthermore, this one law of God also includes, as an integral part of it, “appropriate penalties to enforce its demands.”² This feature is a necessary part of a law system and is so recognized by legal authorities. Austin defines law as, “a rule laid down for the guidance of an intelligent being having authority over him” and then he continues by analyzing the three elements which characterize law – command,

¹ Walter R. Martin, “The Christian and the Law,” Eternity, IX, No. 6 (June, 1958), 18.

² McClain, op. cit., p. 9.

duty or obligation, and sanction or penalty.¹

In a fine article analyzing law as it was found in the literature of the ancient oriental and biblical times, Mendenhall shows that the concept of law then was no different than today. He defines law by saying it means “the exercise of coercive power by the community or its agents.”² Then in discussing further religious obligation he points out that such obligation is sanctioned by deity himself:

This is to say that an act contrary to the will of the deity will be punished directly by the deity in ways which vary, of course, depending upon the concepts of divine action held by the community.³

In continuing his discussion this same author points out that a specific covenant is the very foundation of religious obligation and that consequently we note that Israel “regarded the covenant at Sinai as the event which brought into existence Israel as a distinct religious community.”⁴ He further makes the point that the Decalogue as such was not law, but “simply the stipulation of the obligations to the deity which the community accepted as binding.”⁵ The Decalogue became the source of community policy in law, but in the Decalogue

¹ Austin quoted by Archibald M’Caig, “Law,” The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, ed. James Orr (Chicago: The Howard-Severance Company, 1930), III, 1844.

² George E. Mendenhall, “Ancient Oriental and Biblical Law,” The Biblical Archaeologist, XVII, No. 2 (May, 1954), 26.

³Ibid., p. 27.

⁴Ibid., p. 28.

⁵Ibid.

itself there were no provisions for action by the community against the offender. The law provisions follow later as the means for the community to avoid bringing upon them the wrath of God because some member of the nation had breached the covenant. This must be done by action which is essentially law. Mendenhall further says:

The Decalogue describes the interests of the deity which are protected by the deity, but law protects the interests of the community by averting from itself the punitive action of God.¹

Hence the essential characteristic of law is seen to be sanctions against the violator of the covenant.

Scripture also recognizes that the element of penalty is a vital part of a legal system by laying down certain punishment for violations of God's statutes, judgments, and commandments (Lev. 26:14-46). Moreover it should be noted that in the same context provision is made whereby the Abrahamic Covenant will be kept by Jehovah in spite of everything which the nation of Israel may do (Lev. 26:40-46). Hence it is clearly distinguished that Abraham was not living under a legal system as became true of the nation later, under Moses. Certainly it is obvious that law without penalty is no more than a recommendation or good advice. Thus the Law requires obedience, or let the violator suffer the consequent penalty.

Tithing was a part of the Law. — One of the many provisions of the system was that the Jew should give three tithes in conformity to the appropriate instructions.² Since tithing

¹Ibid.

² These three tithes have been discussed previously in Chapter V.

was practiced at least as far back as the time of Abraham it is readily recognized that the inclusion of that principle in the codification of the Law was quite natural. Thus it was not something new to the Jews, but that to which they were accustomed. However, according to the inspired record, apparently the principle of the tithe under the Law was enlarged to include two other tithes in addition to that principle which antedated the Law by so many centuries. But it is to be observed that all three of these tithes were vital provisions of the legal system and their observance was obligatory upon the Israelites or else they would incur the appropriate penalty which followed as a result of disobedience. It is well known how that in the experience of the nation of Israel, whenever a revival or reformation was instituted, tithing was immediately reestablished.¹ Thus its vital connection to the legal system was always recognized, for the Law must be kept in its entirety, or it was a broken Law. Hence it is seen that a principle which was practiced before there was a legal system was incorporated vitally into the Mosaic Law and became part of that way of life which God gave to Israel, but not to the entire world.

Tithing In Relation To Grace

This is the crux of the whole subject of tithing for our day, but it cannot be understood clearly until the subject has been seen against the background of the Old Testament

¹ See Chapter V.

Both Testaments are so closely interwoven that neither Testament can be fully understood without the other. The subject of tithing is an illustration in point. Upon the basis of our consideration of the Old Testament teaching on this subject we are now ready to consider tithing in relation to Grace to determine if the practice of tithing today is a return to legalism as is frequently claimed.

The basis for life under Grace. — There is a basic difference between life under the Law and that which is under Grace. Under the legal system the Jew was required to “do,” while under Grace life is based upon love for the Lord. In the “doing” which the Law required, hypothetically the Jew could be saved, for it is written “ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the Lord” (Lev. 18:5). Christ also said, “if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments (Mt. 19: 17); and Paul declared that “Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man which doeth those things shall live by them” (Rom. 10:5). Thus the Law emphasized “doing,” but it also required that the “doing” should be perfect (Gal. 3:10). Moreover, “this perfection of obedience included the inward attitude as well as the outward act, the thought as well as the deed (Mt. 5:28).”¹ Hence it is seen that the demands of the Law were absolute perfection which no man could produce, as verified by the scriptural statement that “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”

¹ McClain, op. cit., p. 14.

(Rom. 3:23).

The basis for life under Grace is the very opposite of that under Law — it is complete trust in and dependence upon Another, thus it is the complete forsaking of “doing” which characterized the Law. As the Christian studies the Bible he learns that what Christ has done for him is the result of God’s love: “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him” (I Jo. 4:9). This love of God should become the challenge to the believer to live a life based upon love also: “Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (I Jo. 3:16). As the love of God is seen more fully the believer will become more mindful of the exhortation: “Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another” (I Jo. 4:11). In stating that love is the motive for New Testament giving, Stedman well says, “though many motives often of a sensual character existed for paying tithes, but one can be traced in New Testament giving, and that is love. Where giving stems from any other source it by so much falls below the New Testament standard.”¹

Therefore, life under Grace is seen to be based upon and motivated by love — hence the heart attitude is the important thing even as it was under the Law. However, even though under the Law the heart attitude was right, still the

¹ Stedman, *loc. cit.*, CVIII, No. 430 (April-June, 1951), 207.

performance was completely dependent upon the individual, while under Grace the enablement is accomplished by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, it should be noted that the Law provided specific penalties for any infractions, whereas there is complete silence under Grace concerning specific penalties for failures. The challenge for life under Grace is not the fear of penalties, but it is that since God has so loved us, we can do no less than live on the basis of showing forth that love in our lives.

Under Grace there are commandments. – The idea is common that under Grace there can be no commandments, for it is thought that commandments belong only to the Mosaic Law. That such is hardly the case in Scripture may be demonstrated when the meaning of the word is made clear. In the Old Testament there is a specialized use of the word when reference is made to the Ten Commandments, but such use is within the scope of the meaning of the word. However that use does not encompass the entire meaning, especially as it is found in the New Testament.

Christ speaks of His commandments in these words: “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me” (Jo. 14:21). Thus there is a New Testament usage of the word “commandments” which is associated with the Church Age. Does this mean that there is a mixture of law and grace?

The word “commandment” (ἐντολή) means an order, command, charge, or precept and according to the context has a number of uses, such as referring to the commandments of

the Mosaic Law (Mt. 15:3), a magistrate's order or edict (Jo. 11:57), and "of the commandments of God, especially as promulgated in the Christian religion: I Jn. iii. 23; iv. 21; v. 3."¹ This latter use apparently is what is meant by the Lord's commandments, for in Jo. 14:23 Christ says: "If a man love me, he will keep my words." Thus the Lord Himself explains His use of the word "commandments" which He had used in verse 21 as meaning His Word. McClain very clearly explains that this refers to "the total Word of God,"² that is, the entire Bible must be studied to know Christ's "words" to us. The same writer continues by saying:

To be sure, there is progress in the revelation of God through the Son. In the movement of history, some things are superseded; others may be abolished. Some things are more important than other things. We must read the Book of God, not mechanically, but under the guidance of His Holy Spirit.³

Hence the entire Word of God must be studied carefully to learn the interrelationship of its various parts and to discover the specific instructions for us today. In our Lord's high priestly prayer He says of His disciples: "they have kept thy word" (Jo. 17:6); and this was in spite of their many weaknesses and failures. Therefore, what does it mean to say they have kept His word? Again we quote from McClain for the answer to this question:

Surely, this judgment is not based upon any legalistic balance between so many things done and so many things left undone, but rather upon the heart and the direction

¹ Thayer, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

² McClain, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

of the life course—they loved the Lord and treasured His words and they were faced in the right direction.¹

Thus to keep the commandments of the Lord means to live in conformity to the Word of God and especially do we find much instruction for such Christian living in the New Testament.

Without being charged with being a legalist² we obey the Lord's Word concerning baptism, the observance of the Lord's Supper, and many other commands of the Word. Therefore, if the New Testament especially, instructs concerning the observance of the tithe principle, why should it be considered to be any more legalism than is the observance of baptism or the Communion Service? As has been seen, the basis for the Christian life is that because of our love for the Lord we gladly obey His Word. This is the very opposite of the motive for "doing" as required under the Mosaic legal system. Jacobs states it this way:

The new life in Christ enkindles love, and not only makes the commandments the rule of life, but the life itself the free expression of the commandments and of the nature of God, in which the commandments are grounded.³

Therefore, through the present day ministry of the Holy Spirit in the believer's heart he lovingly will tithe and do anything else that Christ commands in His Word. In writing concerning winning people to Christ, Jackson states:

¹Ibid.

² A legalist is understood to be one who believes in salvation through works or obedience to the Law rather than through faith.

³ H. E. Jacobs, "Commandment," The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, ed. James Orr (Chicago: The Howard-Severance Company, 1930), II, 679.

It is important to bring men to Christ. But the Lord commands us to do more; and we cannot win men by being disobedient to some of His commands. We are to baptize them, and we are to teach them. These are commands, not suggestions.¹

All of this living will be without any taint of legalism, for the Word of God for today omits the legal aspect of sanctions or penalties as they are carried out under the legal system of Moses.

Today grace dominates, for the Lord Himself has provided the needed sacrifice whereby believers are justified by His grace. In appreciation for what the Lord has done for him and out of a heart motivated by love the believer keeps the Lord's commandments not for justification, but as a demonstration of sanctification. The Bible is the standard of conduct for the believer today, as the guide for faithfulness as directed by its principles and specific commands. Love, not fear, rules the believer's heart; therefore, the Christian life is joyous and not burdensome.

Tithing is spiritual, not ceremonial. — Under the Mosaic Covenant tithing was part of the ceremonial aspect of the worship of God. But today the emphasis of worship is spiritual and not ceremonial. To be ceremonially correct is not the important thing, but it is most important to be in the proper spiritual relation with the Lord. Such a spiritual condition is attainable only by permitting the Holy Spirit to teach us the Word of God and to cause it to

¹ Paul R. Jackson, "Doctrine of the Local Church," Adult Student, Vol. V, No. 1 (October Quarter, 1956), 46.

work through us.

Abraham's tithing experience apparently was of the spiritual nature rather than ceremonial, for there is no hint of a temple in which he presented the tithe, neither is there any indication that it was done on a legalistic basis. Furthermore, by this act Abraham acknowledged God's ownership of all things, for it was at this time that he spoke of God as the possessor of heaven and earth. Thus his tithing was in recognition of God's ownership and of his own stewardship before the Lord. Candlish comments that Melchizedek in receiving the tithes as God's appointed medium "received them as the pledge and token of the whole of what was tithed being the Lord's, of its belonging to God, and being freely dedicated and consecrated to him."¹ Also writing in a similar way, Cook says:

Abraham's tithing was free from ceremonialism. With the Jews tithing was a matter of ceremony and ritual. The tendency of all ritual is to mere formalism. Abraham's act was of a more spiritual nature. It was undoubtedly an expression of his gratitude to God for his goodness to him in the victory he had just gained. Our giving is to be spiritual and not a matter of form and ceremony. Tithing is to be a spiritual act.²

One further word concerning tithing being spiritual and not ceremonial should be considered. When the Jews tithed to the Levites there was no recognition of superiority nor of inferiority; that is, they did not recognize that the Levites were superior and themselves inferior to the Levites.

¹ Candlish, *op. cit.*, p. 172.

² Cook, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

But when Abraham tithed, Melchizedek was recognized as superior, for in Heb. 7:7 it is stated, that “without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.” Wuest puts it this way in writing of the Jew’s tithing:

It was a mere compliance to a law. But in the case of Abraham, there was no law that required him to pay tithes to Melchizedec. When he paid the latter tithes, it was an acknowledgment on his part of his own inferiority and a personal tribute to his greatness and superiority.¹

Previously in our study of Hebrews chapter 7, especially it was seen that if tithing is to be practiced today, then it is in the pattern of the Abrahamic tithe. Now if that is the correct understanding of the subject, then it must follow that tithing today is just as truly a spiritual matter and not ceremonial at all.

Tithing today is a phase of stewardship.— Much of what we have already considered concerning the matter of tithing in relation to Grace has demonstrated that tithing today is not to be construed as legalism. Therefore, in view of that consideration we shall now note that it really is a phase of stewardship. Believers are stewards of their time, talents, and means and they should give a good accounting in each of those areas. For our study it is sufficient to note only tithing in relation to stewardship.

Basic to this phase of our study is the scriptural declaration that everything belongs to the Lord. The Psalmist stated this fact when he said: “The earth is the Lord’s and

¹ Wuest, op. cit., p. 129.

the fulness thereof" (Ps. 24:1); and the prophet also declared: "the silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts" (Hag. 2:8). Therefore, in view of these statements we are no more than stewards who must give an account of our stewardship, which would include not only the portion which we give to the Lord, but also everything that we have. Therefore, tithing is an expression of our stewardship, but that is not all of it.

To say that stewardship does not begin until after we have tithed is to misapprehend the scope of stewardship and the relationship which obtains between stewardship and tithing. Tithing is not the chief thing in stewardship, yet it is important and has its proper place. Moreover in view of God's ownership of everything, the stewardship of the nine-tenths is just as important in the Lord's sight as is the one-tenth. Thus it is that giving is to be done in view of the fact that we are stewards and not owners. This stewardship relationship was true of Israel also, for the Scripture says, "The land shall not be sold for ever; for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me" (Lev. 25:23). Thus by the very nature of stewardship a faithful steward will give, for he will recognize that he is under obligation to make returns to His Lord.

In determining how much to give the only recorded principle is that of the tithe. Nothing in Scripture says that this is the limit, but rather we read in the Old Testament of the many sacrifices and offerings which were made over and above the tithe. Furthermore, as noted previously,

the Law required two tithes every year and a third tithe every three years. Thus all through Scripture the tithe was not the limit of giving; it was the minimum; it was only the starting-point. Hence under Grace stewardship and tithing are just as compatible as in the previous dispensation.

In fact under Grace we must give because we love, for loveless giving is lifeless giving. Furthermore, under Grace it is inconceivable that a believer would be content to give less than a tithe, or only a tithe if he really loved the Lord.

Rather he would want to give all that he could with the tithe as merely the minimum or starting-point. Many a Christian ought to give far more than the tithe in view of the larger stewardship with which the Lord has intrusted [sic] him.

When a Christian considers carefully all that the Lord has done for him, then tithing really becomes a sacred privilege. An excellent summary of tithing and stewardship is given by J. P. Hobson as follows:

We are not under law, but under grace; the tithe we owe the Master is his, not ours; but its payment is an act of love on our part, a privilege rich in blessings. The tithe is simply a measure he has given us in his word to let us know what our duty is, that we may know the minimum of what we ought to do. If in recognition of special blessings of God we would give something to him, we can make such free-will offerings as we please in addition to the tithe. The law is no longer a schoolmaster to compel us to tithe, but the duty remains and is more sacred, being now like all other Christian duties, a matter not of law, but of love.¹

Thus we have seen tithing as a phase of stewardship and that we cannot excuse ourselves for not putting God first

¹ Quoted by Cook, op. cit., p. 128.

in our giving. In following this procedure our giving should have in it the element of faith and sacrifice and we will see that tithing, as important as it is, should not be made to eclipse our responsibilities or stewardship in the administration of our entire income for the glory of God.

Recognition of the prior law. — At this point a legal question arises which is settled by the application of the principle of the prior law. The question which needs to be answered is, “what was abolished when the Law was done away in Christ’s sacrifice upon the Cross?” By His sacrifice Christ fulfilled and thus satisfied the Law — therefore animal sacrifices ceased and the various codified regulations ceased. “Did the tithe go with these regulations?” We shall answer this question in the light of the principle of the prior law.

1. The prior law principle refers to a recognized principle of jurisprudence which is, in the words of Judge J. P. Hobson, “A temporary statute, expiring by its own limitations, leaves the law as it found it.”¹ This may be illustrated by the Constitution of the United States which is known as the Fundamental Law or it may be recognized as the prior law. Congress may place a law upon the statute books endorsing or reaffirming a portion of that Constitution, but a later Congress may also repeal that statute. When that is done only the statute is removed and the Constitution has not been affected in any way — it is the prior law and it still stands

¹ Quoted by John G. Alber, The Scriptural Basis for the Tithe (5th. ed., rev. and condensed; Lincoln, Nebraska: Nebraska Christian Missionary Society, 1916), p. 20.

untouched.

2. By virtue of its antiquity the tithing principle is seen as a prior law; its beginning is possibly as early as the human race. In the early part of our study it was noted that tithing was practically a universal principle among the peoples of the earth, even antedating Abraham. Furthermore, it was noted that the offerings of Cain and Abel were not blood sacrifices, but in the category of a “gift” and this was suggestive of the tithe principle. Even if the offerings of Cain and Abel were not tithes, still the question arises why did the people of antiquity so universally practice tithing? The reason for Abraham’s tithing to Melchizedek is easily and satisfactorily explained by Gen. 26:5 which apparently refers to a prior law or ancient fundamental principle.¹

3. When Moses was given the Law for the nation of Israel, the fundamental principle, or prior law of the tithe was incorporated into that legal code. Thus through the Law that principle was reaffirmed as binding upon the nation of Israel. But as we have seen, Moses added to that principle two other tithes² and many offerings.³ Thus the part of the Law which referred to giving and which was new and distinctively Mosaic was the second and third tithes and the offerings.

Furthermore, it must be borne in mind that the Law

¹ See Chapter III.

² See Chapter V.

³ See Chapter VI.

was not permanent but only temporary, and the limits of its expiration were set by Gal. 3:19 in these words: "It was added because of transgression till the seed [Christ] should come." In Hebrews the writer reasons that if the Law had brought in perfection, there would have been no need for the reestablishing of the ancient order of the Melchizedekian priesthood (Heb. 7:11, 12). Hence the temporary character of the Law is manifested to all.

4. With the passing away of the Law, it in no way necessarily affected the principle that was in effect before Moses' time. Thus the prior law principle would operate today in the case of the first tithe which was used for the support of the Lord's work unless Scripture declared to the contrary. A New Testament illustration is that we pass over Moses to Abraham to establish justification by faith and it is stated by Paul: "the law [of Moses], which was four hundred and thirty years after [Abraham], cannot disannul, that it should make the promise [to Abraham] of none effect" (Gal. 3:17). Thus

the abolition of the Mosaic law does not affect the prior law of Justification by faith. It only abolished the types and shadows that were fulfilled in Christ, the national institutions and feasts and the tithe that maintained them. Christ abolished no fundamental law. He "came not to destroy the law but to fulfill it." He fulfilled the types and shadows but principles are eternal.¹

Thou shalt not steal nor kill are fundamental principles which are not merely Jewish laws, for they are universal to the entire

¹ Alber, *op. cit.*, p. 20,

tire human race. When the Law was abolished these principles were not likewise abolished, because they are fundamental principles as old as the human family. The same is true of the tithe, which with the passing away of the temporary Law left it as it had been originally.

5. One further consideration seems appropriate at this point which is, that in view of the prior law principle there seems to be no necessity that the tithe should pass away. There is a clear reason why the blood sacrifices should cease—they were fulfilled in Christ the great antitype of whom they were but the type. Furthermore, with the passing of the sacrifices went also the altar, and the priests who offered the sacrifices upon the altar. Thus when the types and shadows were fulfilled in Christ there was no longer a reason for them to continue to exist—in fact it is right that they should pass away.

But when we come to the tithe we note that it was typical of nothing, neither was it a shadow of anything. Therefore, there is no valid reason that it should pass away as did the various elements of the Law. Rather, the tithe should be expected to be reaffirmed unless there is some clear statement to the contrary. In the light of progressive revelation we ought to expect Christianity to enlarge upon the previous teachings of the Old Testament rather than to give ground in a retreat. In this connection we quote Alber as follows:

To say that the principle of the tithe has been abolished in Christ is to say that while in everything else Christ has enlarged upon Moses, in this respect the Gospel sounds a retreat; . . . that with greater blessings than the Jew the Christian may, if he feels like it, give less for the sake of the world than the Jew gave for the sake of Palestine; . . . that the Jew did more under a loveless law than the Christian under the law of love; that cold duty calls forth greater sacrifice under the law than gratitude under the Gospel; that Sinai is stronger than Calvary; . . . Such conjecture could not stand the light of reason if there were no revelation.¹

Conclusion

In our consideration of the nature of the tithe we have seen that when Abraham tithed it is quite apparent that he was under no legal compulsion as the Mosaic system required. But as a man of faith he acted on that basis and he gave as though he were accustomed to doing it. God dealt with him in Grace and Abraham obeyed God's voice in faith and the Lord was pleased with him. Such tithing was of the highest order possible.

Tithing was also incorporated as one of the features under the Mosaic Law. The Law required "doing" which included the keeping of it in every point, or it would be a broken Law for which penalties would be exacted. Since the Law was a way of life, therefore, the tithe was a part of that way of life so that its observance could not be avoided. Thus a principle which antedated the Law became obligatory upon the nation of Israel under the provisions of the Mosaic Covenant.

When we studied tithing in relation to Grace it was

¹Ibid., p. 21

seen that the basis for Grace living is love for the Lord and not the fear of penalties which the broken Law exacted. It is true that under Grace there also are commandments, but these are understood to encompass the entire Word of God which the believer will keep because of his love for his Lord. This is the very opposite motive to that of "doing" which is required under the Law. Therefore, under Grace the believer will tithe because it is part of God's Word and he in turn loves the Lord who is the Author of that Word.

Furthermore it was seen that under the Law tithing was ceremonial while under Grace it is a spiritual exercise as a token recognizing God's ownership of all things. Moreover under Grace there is the recognition of the superiority of the Melchizedekian priesthood in the Person of Christ and the believer's inferiority before Him. Hence tithing is a phase of the believer's stewardship before the Lord and it should be exercised [sic] as faithfully as any other phase of his total stewardship.

Further substantiation that tithing is not a return to legalism is noted in the operation of the recognized principle of jurisprudence concerning the prior law, which says that "a temporary statute, expiring by its own limitations, leaves the law as it finds it."¹ The operation of this law says that when the Mosaic Law (which was only intended to be temporary) was ended, the tithe principle was not abrogated, because it was the prior law. The tithe was not something

¹ Hobson quoted by Alber, op. cit., p. 20.

instituted by the Law, but it was a previously existing principle which was merely reaffirmed as binding upon Israel.

Therefore, when the dispensation of the Law ended only the second and third tithes were brought to an end, but the first tithe, or prior law, was in no way affected by that change.

Furthermore, since the tithe was not a type, as were so many features of the Law, it had no antitype to fulfill it and by that means to cause it to cease. Thus in our conclusion of the nature of the tithe there seems to be no good reason to consider tithing under Grace to be a return to legalism.

Apparently it is a principle which is thoroughly in keeping with the scriptural concept of Grace and hence it is scriptural to practice it as a minimum basis for Christian stewardship performed out of love for the Savior. We now move on to a consideration of other phases of the Christian and the tithe.

Storehouse Tithing

Among some advocates of tithing for today there has developed the term “storehouse tithing” by which is meant that Christians should place all of their tithe in the local church treasury. This term has its origin in the challenge for the children of Israel to bring all their tithes into the “storehouse” (Mal. 3:10). We need to consider if this is in keeping with the scriptural tithe in the light of our analysis of that subject.

An Old Testament Term

Used only once. – The term “storehouse tithing” strictly

speaking does not appear in the Scriptures, but the separate words “storehouse” and “tithes” do appear once in Mal. 3: 10. Hence the term “storehouse tithing” has been formulated to express in a convenient form the idea that Malachi is calling upon the Jews in his day to get right with Jehovah and show it by bringing all of their tithes into the Temple in Jerusalem.

Apparently the “storehouse” refers to the store chambers which were a part of the Temple structure in Malachi’s day. There is no record when these store-rooms were first instituted. Keil states that the tithes were delivered “at least after the times of the later kings, at the sanctuary, where store-chambers were built for the purpose” of storing them.¹ It should be noted, also, that there is no mention of either a Temple or a storehouse in association with the tithing practiced prior to the time of the Law. Thus it is seen to be a term distinctly associated with only the Law period.

Other Old Testament terms.—In a number of instances other terms are used to express the same idea of storing the tithes in the Temple: “chambers” (2 Chron. 31:11; Neh. 10:38, 39; 12:44); “treasure house” (Neh. 10:38); and “treasuries” (Neh. 13:12). In connection with Solomon’s Temple, certain “chambers” are mentioned, but the purposes for which they were constructed are not designated. They may have been used “partly for the accommodation of those engaged in the service

¹ Keil, Minor Prophets, II, 463, 464.

of the Temple.”¹

Thus according to the Old Testament record storehouse tithing was not known previous to the giving of the Law and its mention comes quite late in the history of the nation of Israel before the time of Christ. It does seem highly probable, however, that it was practiced from the beginning of the Law, for it is obvious that some provision had to be made to take care of the tithes of grain, etc. which were brought by the people. Therefore, it seems reasonable to consider that the Jews practiced storehouse tithing even though it is mentioned only once. In the light of these things it is appropriate that we consider if the idea of storehouse tithing has anything to do with Christianity.

The Christian Storehouse

Since under the Law there was a special place, the Temple, or the storehouse, to which the tithes were brought, and since prior to the Law no such place was designated, it is quite natural to ask the question, “Is there a storehouse today?” In other words, “is the local church the equivalent of the Temple in the matter of receiving tithes?” This is a vital question among Christians and it needs careful study so that the answer will be seen in its proper scriptural perspective. It is necessary to analyze and compare carefully the teaching concerning the Temple and the local church if the proper understanding is to be attained.

¹ W. Shaw Caldecott, “Temple,” The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, ed. James Orr (Chicago: The Howard-Severance Company, 1930), V, 2932.

The Tabernacle as a type. — Since the storehouse tithing idea is derived from the passage in Malachi, it is necessary to see the scriptural teaching concerning the Temple and especially its predecessor, the Tabernacle. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews makes it very clear that the Old Testament Tabernacle was a type of the true Tabernacle in Heaven. This fact is stated when the writer describes the Tabernacle as “a figure for the time then present” (9:9) and later in the same chapter he speaks of the things associated with the Tabernacle as “patterns of things in the heavens” (9:23). He further reveals this typology a third time when he says: “Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us” (9:24).

It is apparent that at the time of writing this epistle the author considered that Christ had entered already into the heavenly, or true Tabernacle. Therefore, since the antitype has come into existence, then that must mean that the type is no longer needed and has been done away. This idea is brought out when it is reasoned that because Christ is a priest after the order of Melchizedek, then that is proof that the old order of priesthood has been changed and likewise also the Law (Heb. 8:11, 12). Therefore, the ministry of the earthly Tabernacle has been transferred to the true and abiding Tabernacle in heaven, for the antitype must carry out perfectly that which was foreshadowed by its type.

Furthermore it is obvious that since the Tabernacle

was a type of the true, or heavenly Tabernacle, then it was not a type of the earthly or local church. Hence there is no connection between the Tabernacle (or its successor, the Temple) and the local church of today, neither do the teachings concerning it apply to the earthly church unless the Scripture specifically teaches that there is a connection or application.

Moreover it is apparent that the Temple succeeded the Tabernacle as the place of worship for the nation of Israel, for God directed that Solomon should build the Temple and not David.¹ This is further verified by the fact that the sacrifices, the priesthood, the tithes, and all functions associated with worship were transferred to the Temple. Thus the Temple was the proper center of worship in Malachi's day, and it should not be overlooked that there was just one Temple provided for all the nation of Israel. As has been seen, this Temple was a type of the one true Temple today, but nowhere is there any indication that the earthly Temple was a type of the many local churches. The type and antitype require just one earthly Temple with its counterpart the one heavenly Tabernacle. Therefore, to secure storehouse tithing from the Old Testament Tabernacle, or Temple, is seen to be unwarranted, scripturally speaking.

The prior law and the storehouse. — The operation of the principle of the prior law in relation to tithing has been noted already, hence there is no need for a restudy of

¹ Cf. II Sam. 7:12, 13; I Ki. 5:2-5; 7:51.

that, but it is necessary to see how that principle functions with reference to the storehouse. By reason of this principle the original tithing principle which was practiced at least as early as Abraham's day and which was continued during the dispensation of the Law is seen to continue to operate today. These features of the Law which were distinctly Mosaic, or which were typical, ceased at the Cross. Thus the second and third tithes ceased with the change of the Law, and the sacrifices (which were types of Christ) also ceased when Christ fulfilled their typology on the Cross. Furthermore since the Temple and its priesthood were types, they, too, ceased their existence with their fulfillment in Christ. Therefore, there can be no possible connection between the Temple and the local church. To say that there is a connection between them comes dangerously close to saying that the church is the successor or continuation of Israel.

In view of this situation it would be quite natural to raise the question, "where does the tithe belong if the church is not the storehouse today?"

The tithe belongs to the Lord. — The owner of an article has the right to designate its use and so this principle must be permitted to operate in the case of the tithe.

1. It is an Old Testament principle that the tithe belongs to the Lord. When the Lord instructed Moses concerning the Law He was careful to state the principle of ownership of the tithe by saying that the tithe "is holy unto the Lord" (Lev. 27:30, 32). Hence there could be no mistaking who

had the prior claim upon it. Then in the exercise of His right of ownership the Lord also declared that the tithe which was His should be given to the Levites for their support since they had no inheritance in the land as the other Israelites had (Num. 18:21, 24, 26). Thus the Lord instructed that those who were to minister in His service were to receive their support from those who benefitted by their consecrated service. Here, then, is a clear teaching that those who minister in spiritual matters should be supported with material means by those who have been recipients of their spiritual service.

Although this principle of ownership is not so declared in the case of Abraham, still it is implied at least in his practice of tithing. When he gave the tithe to Melchizedek he acknowledged him not only as the priest of the most high God, but also as the priest of the God who was the possessor of heaven and earth (Gen. 14:18-22). Thus Abraham recognized God's right of ownership and his own responsibility of stewardship in that he was expected to give his tithe to God's priest.

Therefore, it is seen that antedating the Law the tithe was given to God's priest in recognition that God owns all things and man has the responsibility of stewardship. Then under the Law it was specifically stated that the tithe belonged to the Lord, but since it was His to do with as He chose, He had decreed that the people should give it for support of the Levites.

2. The New Testament also recognizes the principle

that the tithe belongs to the Lord. This ought to be no surprise, for since it was true in the Old Testament, it could be no less true today, for the Lord's right of ownership does not change from age to age. Previously in our study of New Testament tithing¹ it was seen that since Christ is the antitype of the Melchizedekian priesthood, He is receiving tithes today (Heb. 7:8). Furthermore, since Christ as the High Priest today offers both "gifts and sacrifices" in the heavenly sanctuary (Heb. 8:2, 3), His ministry of "gifts" would include the tithe. Thus, then, the tithes of today are given to Him who is the eternal High Priest.

It should be observed further that there is no earthly Temple today comparable to the one of the Law dispensation. It was only under the Law that there was a specified earthly Temple into which the tithes were brought, but in this day of Grace there is no instruction to bring the tithes to an earthly Temple. The focus of worship has now been centered heavenward where the eternal High Priest is ministering in the heavenly Tabernacle not made by human hands. Thus for today the tithe is distinctly associated with heavenly things since the One to Whom it is given is in heaven where He is ministering on behalf of His own people (Heb. 8:1-6).

3. In conformity with His right as the owner of the tithe our Lord has repeated what He did under the Law — He has designated the tithe as the means of support for those who are engaged in the work of ministering the Gospel (I Cor. 9:

¹ See Chapter VII.

13, 14).¹ Thus the tithe is considered as having been presented to the Lord when it has been faithfully given for the furtherance of the Lord's work. As has been noted above there is no designated earthly Temple as the repository for the tithe, but rather the repository is higher than a mere earthly place—it is the heavenly sanctuary of which the earthly was merely a shadow, a type. Hence, apparently we are to conclude that the tithe today belongs to the Lord for His work and workers without a specified earthly storehouse.

4. It should be noted further that this provision for the maintenance of the Lord's work marks progress in revelation. In Abraham's day we note that one priest received tithes from one man; under the Law we note that one tribe out of one nation received the tithe for their livelihood; and now under Grace we note that there is a worldwide ministry of the Gospel which is to be supported by the tithe of all of God's people. Certainly here is a contrast which seems to be significant. Today's ministry is a missionary ministry world-wide in its scope and with Jesus Christ as its Head, while the Law in its ministry was restricted to the nation of Israel. Hence it is not surprising to see an expanded approach in the application of the giving of the tithe for the support of the Gospel. Today's believers as stewards have not been so restricted in placing their tithe as the Israelites were under the Law, consequently the believer is only instructed to give his tithe to the Lord's work. It is

¹ See Chapter VII.

immediately obvious, however, that such giving has not been left to mere human choice or caprice any more than any other decision which the believer is called upon to make.

5. The Holy Spirit indwells the bodies of believers for at least one purpose and that is to give guidance and direction for every detail of their Christian lives. Spiritual discernment is essential to determine where the tithe is to be used just as much as spiritual discernment is necessary in every other phase of the Christian's walk. Hence it appears that the Lord has deliberately not designated the specific earthly place for the tithe to be deposited in order that the believer may profit from the spiritual experience of giving the Lord's tithe under the personal leading of the Holy Spirit. This high standard of living calls for a continual and careful study of the Word of God that the will of God shall be known "in the context of His Grace" as it is "given in our Lord Jesus Christ."¹ Certainly by this means tithing has been lifted out of any taint of legalism and placed upon the high spiritual plane of Grace living.

6. It is anticipated that there are those who will strenuously object to the above presentation and they will ask, "but what about the local church?" "Will it not be neglected under such a plan?" For now our answer is, there is no need to be unduly concerned for the local church if what has been presented is according to the Scriptures. God's

¹ McClain, *op. cit.*, p. 40. A very enlightening discussion of the objective standard of life for the Christian is given in pages 40-50.

plan cannot be improved upon by man. But we shall have more to say concerning the local church in the next section of our study, so we ask the indulgence of our readers at this point.

Conclusion

In our analysis of storehouse tithing we have seen that the term apparently has its origin in Mal. 3:10 where the nation of Israel is being called upon to bring their tithes again into the storehouse, or the Temple. Also it was noted that this is the only use of the term in this capacity in the Old Testament. Therefore, since this one reference to such a storehouse is associated only with the Law, the problem is, “are we justified in saying that the local church is the storehouse for the tithe, today?”

It is seen that the Tabernacle (and later the Temple) was a type of the heavenly Tabernacle in which Christ is now ministering as our High Priest, and that the Temple was not a type of the local church in any sense of the word. Thus the function which was ascribed to the Temple could not be passed on to the local church, for the heavenly Temple is performing that function now. Through Christ, the High Priest, the tithe is being offered in the true sanctuary in heaven, today.

Furthermore it was noted that the tithe rightfully belongs to the Lord in both the Old and New Testaments and that because of His sovereign ownership He has the right to do with the tithe whatsoever He desires. By virtue of this right He gave it to the priests of the Old Testament for their sustenance and likewise in this day of Grace He had designated

the tithe as the financial means for the propagation of the Gospel. He has said that it should be used for the maintenance of those who labor in the Gospel ministry, but the Lord has not designated any specific earthly place as the repository for the tithe. The local church has not been so designated and neither has any other organization been selected for that purpose. Apparently He has deliberately left the choice of the place for the use of the tithe to be accomplished through the leading of the Holy Spirit in the life of each believer. This can be safely accomplished by each Christian coming to know the will of God through consistent, careful studying of the Word of God. By this means tithing has no possibility of being a return to legalism, but places the administration of the tithe on the high plane of Grace where it ought to be in this day of Grace.

We are now ready to consider how the tithe is to be given in this day of Grace.

Giving The Tithe

Introduction

In our study of storehouse tithing it has been seen that apparently there is no one place, as suggested by the term "storehouse," where the tithe is to be gathered. But it was observed that giving today is to be just as much Spirit-led as is any other phase of the Christian life. This should be no shock nor surprise to a Christian who is instructed in the relationship of the Holy Spirit to believers in this day of Grace. Such a type of giving really is giving on the highest plane conceivable and agrees perfectly with the principle of Grace. When Christian giving is properly correlated to

the ministry of the Holy Spirit there will be no difficulties concerning where the tithe is to be placed, but it is when the ministry of the Holy Spirit is ignored in this area of Christian living that difficulties and problems will arise.

Our previous study has revealed that there are two characteristics of the scriptural tithe: (1) the tithe belongs to the Lord, and (2) the Lord has designated the tithe as the means for sustaining His work of gospelizing the world. This work has many phases to it, but the one purpose of all is to get the Word of God to the people of the world that sinners may be saved and saints may be edified so that they may grow spiritually. Hence the believer has the responsibility to seek the Lord's direction in the giving of his tithe and any giving beyond the tithe as well. 'In discussing the Christian's responsibility to support the Gospel ministry Constable says:

Let the believer but reflect that in reality he has no right to withhold his assistance, that he is only allowed the discretion of selecting such objects as appear to him most to require aid, but that what he is asked for is not really his but God's, and he will see the propriety of altering his conduct, and to look less to the manner of advocacy, and more to the cause which is advocated.¹

We shall now note in this section the claims upon the Christian's tithe.

¹ Henry Constable, "The Measure of Christian Liberty," Gold and the Gospel, eds. Thomas Sinclair and W. Paul (London: James Nisbet and Co., 1851), p. 66.

The Church

The church, as it is observed in the world, stands out prominently as the symbol of Christianity. Wherever Christianity has gone, the visible sign of its victory over sin and Satan is the establishment of local churches in which the believers band themselves together to further the work of the Gospel. There are, of course, a lot of misconceptions concerning the visible church as an organization, its character, and its function, but since the purpose of this dissertation is not a study of the church (whether visible, invisible, or both) we cannot digress into a study of it. Suffice it for our purpose that we are thinking in terms of what is commonly accepted as a Christian church which states that it is established upon and in keeping with the Bible and its teachings. There are churches which meet the biblical requirements or pattern and there are also those which do not. Obviously there are others which are somewhere between these two as far as their description is concerned. Since we are to consider the Christian's relation to the church in the matter of the tithe, the church of which we write is to be thought of as that church which more nearly meets the scriptural description. We consider first:

The importance of the local church. — Since our study indicates that the Lord's tithe is intended for the use of His work upon this earth and since the church stands out so prominently as the symbol of Christianity, then it is right that we should inquire concerning its claim upon the tithe. Hence we must consider the importance of the church in the

affairs of Christianity.'

1. It is the only Christian organization which is named in the Bible and it has the Lord as its founder as revealed in such declarations, as, "the church of God which is at Corinth" (I Cor. 1:2). Further it should be observed that not even the Sunday school (which is so prominent in Christian work today) is named in the Scriptures and neither are missionary societies nor Christian training schools. Yet all of these are important phases of Christian work which no thinking person would say should be abandoned in favor of only the church. But it must not be lost sight of that the church is the only institution specifically provided for in the Bible. Hence that fact alone gives it prestige and importance in Christianity.

2. The tenor of Scripture is that every believer should have membership in some local church. It would seem that when the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews said that believers should not forsake their assembling together "as the manner of some is" (Heb. 10:25) he was implying, at least, membership in a church. Furthermore the Apostle Paul frequently wrote to local churches and he gave instructions to Timothy how things should be done in the church (I Tim. 3:15). Wherever Paul went he established churches. Such churches were true to the Word of God, and everywhere throughout the New Testament faithfulness to the Bible is enjoined. Obviously this was true of the churches as well as of individuals. Hence no excuse is provided in the New Testament for a believer

not to unite with a true biblical church.

3. The church's importance is further emphasized by the fact that it is the largest phase of Christian service.

The reason for this is readily discernible when it is recognized that all Christians ought to have membership in an appropriate local church.

4. All members are expected to be active in the Lord's work, for Paul instructs that they are to be trained to do "the work of the ministry" (Eph. 4:12). Thus since the church is vitally concerned in this training program something of its importance is established.

5. The church is comprised of individuals and many of these individuals are called of the Lord into special assignments in Christian service, i.e. missionaries, etc.

Therefore, the church is at the very heart of the Christian testimony; it is the center about which all Christian work, in the final analysis, revolves. By this means the importance of the church is greatly enhanced.

6. In the area of what is designated as "Christian service" the scriptural teaching is that the Holy Spirit appoints people to serve as pastors or missionaries, etc. But the importance of the church in such matters is demonstrated by their responsibility to recognize and concur in such appointments. Such was the procedure when the church at Antioch sent forth Paul and Barnabas into evangelistic work (Acts 13:2, 3).

7. Thus in view of these considerations the church is recognized as the very fountain source of all true Christian

service. Manifestly, then, the church is the most important phase of Christian activity. Therefore, this means that the Christian cannot rightfully ignore the importance of the church, neither can he ignore his responsibility to that organization in the ministry of his stewardship of the tithe.

The believer's responsibility to the church. — Since the tithe properly belongs in the support of the Christian work, and since the Christian is the Lord's steward, it is incumbent upon him to consider the various phases of Christian work as conscientiously [sic] as possible. His responsibility to the church certainly is not to be over-looked.

1. Since the church looms so large in importance it is quite obvious that it must have prior claim in receiving support from the tithe of God's people. A believer's church must be of primary concern in this area of giving, for its needs are so numerous because of its varied and far-reaching ministries. Hence the believer by virtue of his church membership has a very definite moral responsibility to support his local church and to carry his share of the obligations. When he joined the church, and by continuing his membership in it, he thereby accepted responsibility to work together with the other members to fulfill the commitments which the church as a body formulated from time to time. The maintenance of the local work, the support of its missionary program, and the other commitments of the local church are obligations which rest equally upon every member, not just a few. In writing concerning the church, Stowell reminds us that

Every believer ought to give his first loyalty to a New Testament local church. He should be faithful to it, support it, pray for it and make it his primary avenue of service for Christ.¹

2. As the very fountain source of all really worthwhile Christian activities the church must be maintained adequately or Christian service will dry up sooner than [sic] is realized. In writing on the subject of balancing the church budget Jackson concisely comments that

Many churches face serious financial problems because members scatter their tithes and offerings outside of the church, sometimes to very questionable objectives, but at least to works in which they, as a church, have no responsibility. In the meantime workers for whom they should be concerned suffer for lack of support. We need to do some prayerful thinking about meeting our obligations. Many may be giving sacrificially, but unwisely. . . . but we do have a God-given responsibility toward our brethren of like precious faith and order. The churches can teach members this obligation, but cannot enforce obedience. However, as churches, we can set our own financial program in order, and challenge our members to give Biblically.²

The local church is to Christian work as the base of supply is to an army – destroy that base and the army is rendered absolutely helpless and placed at the mercy of the enemy – destroy the local church and the cause of Christ will disintegrate before the attacks of Satan. God forbid that such should come upon the church.

3. In view of giving the tithe according to the Grace principle it is obvious that how much of the tithe

¹ Joseph M. Stowell, "Churchless Christianity," The Baptist Bulletin, XXIV, No. 5 (October, 1958), 2.

² Paul R. Jackson, "Balance the Budget," Baptist Bible Seminary Bulletin, XVII, No. 5 (October, 1958), 2.

should go to the local church has not been stipulated. This permits the full play of the Grace principle so that in accordance with the local responsibilities the giving can be properly adjusted by the leading of the Holy Spirit. Because some people may make license out of this liberty in no way justifies condemning and abandoning the principle. The principle is good and will operate properly if the Holy Spirit is faithfully followed. The believer's moral responsibility to his local church must be met first before it would please the Lord for him to reach out to other fields. Certainly the validity of this responsibility is suggested at least by the instruction that the Gospel must be preached effectively at home before it is proclaimed to wider fields (cf. Acts 1: 8). The Holy Spirit's leading can be depended upon even to the extent that where the church is few in members those members can be so led as to place their entire tithe in that work. True Spirit leadership will leave no need unfulfilled.

In this connection perhaps it ought to be said that the local church should examine carefully its program and budget to discern if it is such as will challenge the members to support it whole-heartedly. A realistic overhauling of the budget items could result in the enthusiastic support of more of the members so that there would be less response to projects not sponsored by the church. In discussing the church budget Jackson makes this type of a challenge by putting forth several timely questions:

Are our budgets sufficiently comprehensive? Do they include too much emphasis on the home church? Is there a proper balance between missions at home and abroad, and the schools that train our workers? There is no uniform formula that can be given. Each church has its responsibilities before the Lord. But these are responsibilities that we must face, and for which we must give answer to the Lord.¹

4. It is very doubtful if non-support or meager support of the church can be scripturally justified in view of the importance of the church to the total ministry of the Gospel. If a Christian says that he cannot support his church because it does not have the proper scriptural ministry, then the cure for that situation is clearly stated in Scripture. It is: "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord" (2 Cor. 6:17). This concept is stated by Stowell in these words:

If the church to which he [the Christian] belongs is apostate he should not desert the principle of the local church, but rather join a truly New Testament church. Or if there is none, he should start one.²

Thus the cure is to unite with a church which is scriptural and follow the Grace principle in giving to its support.

5. Since the Holy Spirit has such a vital connection to the church through the believers whom He indwells and since the church is a divinely instituted organization, it is inconceivable that the Holy Spirit will lead a true believer to refuse to support his church. God cannot still be God and contradict Himself.

¹ Jackson, *loc. cit.*, "Balance the Budget," p. 8.

² Stowell, *loc. cit.*, p. 2.

6. Thus the believer's responsibility to the local church is seen to be a high, holy, and spiritual privilege to do his part in seeing to it that the effectiveness of the church is not lessened through unscriptural giving. His responsibility is to see to it that he fulfills his obligation in giving in accordance with the Spirit's direction. It should be remembered that commendable giving is not necessarily determined by the largeness of the amount, but by its conformity to the will of God. "In the stewardship of His children, God must direct the placing of gifts else they cannot maintain a life of spiritual power and unbroken fellowship with Him."¹ By this means the church will move forward financially because the spiritual quality will be accomplished through the Holy Spirit. Our next consideration is the tithe in relation to other Christian projects.

Other Christian Ministries

It is well known that there are many Christian agencies working in various areas of Christian service and the believer is almost literally bombarded with appeals for urgent assistance. What shall the believer do about them? The suggested procedure would be to establish their scripturalness and their importance or worth-whileness and then determine one's responsibility in the light of the leading of the Holy Spirit.

The importance of these ministries. — In the Christian

¹ L. S. Chafer, Spirit-Directed Giving, A reprint from Central American Bulletin of Sept. 15, 1923 (Dallas, Texas: The Central American Mission, n. d.), p. 3.

world there are various services being performed which contribute their share to the over-all ministry of the Gospel, such as missions, schools, evangelism, etc. Who is qualified to say that the Lord did not lead in establishing many if not all of the various faith missionary agencies to meet the inroads of modernism in the various mission fields of the world? And who can say that the Lord did not establish the various biblically sound Christian schools of one type or another to meet the inroads of a Godless education that is working havoc with young lives? And who can say that the Lord has not established schools for training workers in the Lord's work? Stowell writes:

We do recognize that in times of apostasy when the local churches fail, God sometimes uses extra church organizations. Historically God used the Bible Institute and Bible Conference movements in the last half century to preserve and propagate the truth. Further, in our diverse world there are some tasks that because of prejudice the local church could not do that can be done by another Christian organization. Be that as it may, it does not mean that God has changed his basic plan of operation nor has He given up the use of the local church. It is still the chief channel through which He works.¹

Furthermore it is recognized that the Lord leads those who are willing to be led and He provides specific leadership such as: "he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers" (Eph. 4:11). In accordance with the need He supplies the leadership. Of course the basic consideration concerning any of the ministries is their loyalty to the Word of God, and the second consideration is whether they are performing

¹ Stowell, *loc. cit.*, p. 2.

a real ministry of the Gospel. It may not always be easy to be assured concerning how they meet either one or both of these requirements, but they are necessary qualifications in order to determine the importance of the work since the tithe has been designated by the Lord for the ministry of the Gospel.

A corollary question to these two questions is, does a Christian have a right to support workers who are biblically unsound in certain areas of doctrine while many who are thoroughly biblical await sufficient support? The believer should know the work which he is supporting — this responsibility cannot be dodged.

Hence it is evident that the relative importance of each work must be established with reference to the work of spreading the Gospel. In doing this, then, the church will be kept in its central or primary position and the believer will not under-evaluate the church at the expense of other agencies. Furthermore it must be remembered that the tithe is exclusively for the Lord's work of the ministry of the Gospel, not for other causes be they ever so worthy and worthwhile.

The believer's responsibility to these ministries. —

1. On the basis that these other Christian workers are properly functioning in the capacity of ministering the Gospel it would then seem that they are worthy of some share of the Lord's tithe provided of course that the Lord's will has been indicated by the leading of the Holy Spirit. Right here is where caution need be exercised. The leading of the Holy Spirit is the important factor even as in every detail

of the believer's life. A speaker may be so colorful and make such an appeal as to stir deep emotions and great imagination on the part of his hearers. However the basis for giving is not emotional sympathy, but certainly that the Holy Spirit is leading one to do it. In writing concerning Spirit directed giving, Stedman points out in the following paragraph that Christians are partners in Christ's present work:

No higher calling exists than this. Under grace, each believer is called to look at a bleeding and benighted world through the compassionate eyes of his Lord; to behold the multitude "scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd," and to so administer his trust as to speed the word of the gospel to dying men everywhere, and build up the household of faith. In all this, he may confidently rely upon the Holy Spirit to guide him in placing his gifts aright, and he must learn to heed the voice of the Spirit rather than the wheedlings of men.¹

Chafer also emphasizes the necessity for learning the will of God by saying:

While we all recognize the importance of our obligation to be fully informed with regard to the various objects to which we are giving, we also need to distinguish between the voice of God directing our gifts on the one hand, and the habit of being moved only by the loudest, most insistent human appeal, on the other hand.²

Giving, then, can be spread too thin to be of much value if it is based on emotion, but when done intelligently under the prayerful direction of the Holy Spirit much good will be accomplished.

2. There are many worthy causes, but obviously every believer cannot be responsible for all causes in the sphere of giving. There is a solution to this problem, should a

¹ Stedman, loc. cit., CVIII, No. 430 (April-June, 1951), 208.

² Chafer, loc. cit., p. 1.

believer desire to give more than the Lord's tithe can reasonably be expected to maintain; Tithe-giving is merely the minimum standard established by the Lord, not the maximum. Therefore, the believer is free to give as much above the tithe as directed by the Holy Spirit. Here is an unlimited area of giving if the Holy Spirit leads a believer into it. But it must be just as much under the direction of Him as any other area of our Christian life should be. We may be assured that if the Holy Spirit has led believers to labour in any of these other Christian ministries, He will also lead in providing for their support. In drawing the analogy between Christian giving and Old Testament giving, Ross states it this way:

The Christian seems to be left to deduce his obligation, in love and integrity, from the precedents of Judaism – the superiority of his advantages – the ever enlarging necessities of the world – the higher claims of the Gospel – and the extent of his resources.

Surely it must be a feeble state of piety, and low sense of love to Christ, that can infer an inferior obligation to that of patriarchal times; . . .¹

3. How to give these gifts presents somewhat of a problem. Should they be given through the local church, or should they be sent directly to the agencies involved? There seems to be no scriptural declaration on the subject, but a reasonable and possible solution is right at hand. Since the New Testament has placed the church at the very center of Christian activities nothing could be more logical than that

¹ John Ross, "The Christian Weekly Offering," Gold and the Gospel, eds. Thomas Sinclair and W. Paul (London: James Nisbet and Co., 1851), p. 298.

the gifts be channelled [sic] through the church records. But someone may say that will make a lot of extra work. We reply, cannot that extra work be done to the glory of God? By that means four things Will be accomplished: (1) the Lord's work will have its needs supplied; (2) the giver will be blessed for following the leading of the Holy Spirit; (3) a true picture will be drawn of what the church is actually accomplishing through its members; and (4) the church will be given the further recognition which its position deserves. Surely all of these values will be to the praise and the glory of the Lord.

4. One final word need be said in behalf of this program of giving the tithe to the ministry of the Gospel. Since it seems to be the New Testament plan, then it is workable and ought to be practiced. Furthermore, this type of giving would be one more phase of the ministry which Grace is accomplishing and believers should be taught in it as carefully as they are taught the truths of redemption, sanctification, etc. This kind of giving requires true spiritual discernment which can come only through proper instruction, and a complete yieldedness to the Holy Spirit's ministry. Here, then, giving is lifted out of the realm of legalism and established on the Grace principle where it ought to be for our day.

Conclusion

Although it has been recognized that there is not a specific New Testament passage which enjoins the tithe for

today, yet a careful examination of I Cor. 9:13, 14 and Heb. 7:8, in the light of their contexts, has shown what is a seeming scriptural basis for the practice of tithing in this day of Grace. After having noted the teaching of those passages it was necessary to study how all of this related itself to the Christian. Hence in this present chapter we have discussed the Christian and the tithe.

First of all, the nature of the tithe was noted with reference to Abraham, the Mosaic Law, and then Grace. When Abraham tithed it was seen to have been on the basis of grace and faith and that there was no hint of legalism in what he did. Thus it was the highest order of tithing, since it was vastly superior to tithing which was based upon a legal system.

Tithing under the Law was recognized as just one of the many features of a rule of life which must be kept in its every detail or the individual would be immediately subject to the appropriate penalty provided by the broken Law. But it was noted that although tithing was a vital part of the Law still the Law did not originate the principle. The Lord simply instructed Moses to incorporate into the Law a principle which had been established centuries prior to the Law. The difference was that under Moses tithing became part of a legal system whereas it had been practiced previously on the basis of faith and Grace.

When tithing in relation to Grace was considered it was noted that the basis for life under the Grace principle was established on a very opposite basis than that under the

Law. Under Grace the believer has commandments to be obeyed, but he observes them because he loves the Lord and he desires to please Him above all others. The true Christian is interested in doing the will of God and therefore he studies the entire Bible to learn God's "will" and how he might fulfill it as an expression of his love for his Saviour and Lord. Therefore, tithing becomes a spiritual exercise and by no means is ceremonialism as it was under the Law. Thus tithing becomes a phase of stewardship in which it is merely a token in recognition of the Lord's ownership of all things which the Christian is to administer to the glory of the Lord.

Furthermore, the principle of the prior law was seen to be operative in connection with tithing under Grace. Thus since the tithe began before the Law and was embodied into the Law, then that tithe as the prior law could not cease with the abrogation of the Law. Hence it would be expected that the tithe would continue under Grace unless the Lord Himself would declare its end. But this He has not done.

The second thing considered in this chapter was storehouse tithing. It was found to have been practiced only under the Law and hence it was abrogated with the passing away of the Law as a rule of life. As for a Christian storehouse it was noted that the Temple of the Law was a type of the heavenly Temple in which Christ now ministers. Therefore, the storehouse spoken of by Malachi could not refer to the local church of today as the Christian storehouse. Hence the believer in exercising his spiritual ministry of tithing does so to the Lord in His heavenly Temple. Moreover it was also

seen that although the tithe belongs to the Lord, yet He has designated it as the means for maintaining the ministry of the Gospel. Thus any Christian work which is legitimately engaged in the scriptural Gospel ministry would be included in the Lord's provision from the tithe.

The third part of this chapter dealt with the practical problem of the actual giving of the Christian tithe. Although the local church apparently is not the storehouse today, yet it was recognized that the church is the focal point of Christian service and therefore cannot be ignored. Furthermore, since tithing is a spiritual exercise under Grace and since the Holy Spirit's leading is to be sought in all other phases of the Christian life, then that same leading should be sought for the practice of tithing. If that is done conscientiously [sic], then the local church will be taken care of first and abundantly and other Christian agencies will be provided for also by the same Spirit's leading. Such giving is truly based upon the Grace principle and gives full recognition to the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Christians who are willing to be led by Him.

CHAPTER IX

NEW TESTAMENT OFFERINGS

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Introduction

Although we have concluded the study of the scriptural tithe, yet it seems as though it hardly would be appropriate to close this subject without a consideration of another phase of giving which is vitally associated with the tithe, that is, the subject of offerings which are over and above the tithe. In our consideration of the Old Testament it was seen that the Mosaic Law especially required of the Jew much more than only the tithe for the support of the Levites and priests. He apparently gave a second tithe annually, a third tithe every three years, and many sacrifices and offering. Thus the Jew's religion was seen to be one which required much giving and which at times easily could amount to about one-third of his income. Since that was true under the Law, the natural question is, "Is there anything comparable under Grace, or is the tithe sufficient?"

A favorite reason which is offered in support of the tithe for today is that since the Jew practiced it under the Law, we certainly ought to equal that at least, in view of our greater privileges under Grace. There is no doubt from the standpoint of responsibility and position that the argument is valid. Moreover, since that is the case, the same

forceful reason is valid in laying upon Christians the responsibility to give over and above the tithe. But as we have already seen there apparently is sufficient warrant in the New Testament for Christians to give at least the tithe for the Gospel ministry so that the argument based upon what the Jews did is secondary to that of the New Testament teaching. Therefore, the question is rightly raised, "Is there New Testament teaching which parallels the Old Testament in giving more than the tithe?" Apparently there is and we shall move to a consideration of that matter in this chapter.

There are two outstanding passages involved in this phase of our subject and many passages which speak of generosity in giving. Since the thesis of this dissertation is the scriptural tithe and not the broad subject of New Testament giving, it is unnecessary to analyze each reference which deals with giving, for the purpose of this chapter will be met when it is demonstrated that the New Testament does teach giving which goes beyond the tithe.

I Corinthians 16:1-3

This passage reads as follows:

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem.

Many books and articles have been written on the subject of proportionate giving which are based upon this passage and also upon chapters 8 and 9 in II Corinthians. When

it is seen what these two passages actually teach it will become evident how extremely unfortunate it is that they have been used to advocate proportionate giving in the sense of the tithe. Such teaching of the tithe is presented better in other Scriptures as we have noted previously.¹

Negatively Considered

A careful reading of these verses reveals that this is not giving which involves the ministry of the local church nor activity which pertains to any effort to give out the Gospel message. It is not, then, the tithe, for the tithe is distinctly designated by the Lord for the purpose of supporting the Gospel ministry. In spite of the fact that no mention of the Gospel is made, or even implied, yet more frequently than not this passage is used to teach the tithe. But such teaching is unwarranted in view of the plain statements of the text. In noting this apparent misuse of the reference, Simpson comments that “no passage of Scripture has been so badly abused as I Corinthians 16. No other portion of God’s word has had more read into it and out of it.”²

Positively Considered

The purpose for this instruction in giving is stated to be a “collection for the saints” (v. 1); thus it is manifest that the purpose is vastly different than for the Gospel ministry. Furthermore, it is a special project in which “the

¹ See Chapter VII.

² Simpson, Faithful Also In Much, p. 88.

churches of Galatia” are likewise participating (v. 1) and they are doing it for the saints in Jerusalem (v. 3). Thus it is recognized as an emergency which these churches are helping to meet and the collection is something temporary, not a continual affair. Paul indicates that it was only a temporary undertaking, for he instructs them to get it all ready before he arrives so that they will not have to take care of the matter after he arrives (v. 2). Furthermore he wants the church to appoint some of their number to go with him to take of their “liberality” to Jerusalem (v. 3). Hence this was not intended to be a permanent demand upon their giving.

That this was to be proportionate giving is clear when Paul instructs each of them to “lay by in store, as God hath prospered him” (v. 2) and this is to be done on “the first day of the week.” It should be noted that contrary to the usual thought the believer is not instructed to give his gift to the church every Sunday, but he is to “lay by him in store.” The word *Θησαυρίζων* (in store) means to gather, lay up, heap up, or treasure,¹ and the reflexive pronoun *ἑαυτῷ* (him) indicates that he is to lay it in store “in his home,”² not in a public repository. By this means, then, the believer can make provision for a gift-fund from which money can be taken as the need for extra or special giving arises. Thus according to his ability each was to give.

¹ Thayer, *op. cit.*, p. 290.

² Robertson, *op. cit.*, IV, 200.

Therefore, this is outside the area of the tithe, for a tithe is a set proportion, while in this passage the proportion which is to be given by each person is to be determined by himself as he knows and views his own ability. This is liberality which goes beyond the believer's regular support of the Gospel ministry with his tithe.

Since this giving was intended for assisting believers who were poor and who were passing through a time of financial need, it strongly reminds us of the third tithe under the Law. As noted previously the Lord made provision for assistance for the widow and the fatherless, etc. in Israel by means of a third tithe every third year. Under Grace no such tithe is intimated, but the principle of helping fellow believers who are in need is seen to be just as applicable in the New Testament times as it was in the Old Testament. This provision and practice would demonstrate the believer's love for the Lord even as his tithe would do the same. Hence life under the Grace principle calls upon believers to do no less than the Law required and demonstrated; however, the new motive is our love for the Lord which impells [sic] us to do these things unto His Glory.

II Corinthians 8 and 9

Although longer than the previous passage, these chapters parallel it, for they also deal with the same offering, but in greater elaboration.¹ Paul tries to shame the

¹ The early Church Fathers confused these passages with the tithe. For a summary of their views see Appendix C.

Corinthians to get busy and do something because the churches of Macedonia had taken a similar offering for the same purpose, and they had done it out of “their deep poverty” (8:2).

The Corinthians were wealthier and could help better, but they had been procrastinating and Paul found it necessary to try to stir them to action before he arrived. Thus the whole tenor of these two passages is such as to emphasize that this was a special and temporary relief fund. In view of its purpose the offering could not possibly be construed to be the regular Lord’s tithe which is intended only for the support of His Gospel ministry. How this special offering could be mistaken for the tithe is difficult to understand when its purpose is so clearly stated. Again Simpson expresses it in these words:

It is hard to believe that this simple method should supplant the tithe in rendering our stewardship to God as taught all through Scripture. Using the Macedonians, however, as an example, Paul laid on the hearts of the Corinthians the grace of liberality which is to govern our giving beyond that which we pay to God as a debt. This, he says, is not given as a commandment but as an exhortation, and in no way would it seem to supplant his statement that the Christian tithe is to supply the support of Church leaders . . .¹

As Paul concludes this section on giving it should be noted that he calls this kind of giving a “grace” (8:7); he says it is proof of their love (8:8; 24); and furthermore he makes Calvary the reason why believers should so give: “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift” (9:15). Note that he does not try to evaluate the unspeakable gift, nor to

¹ Simpson, *This World’s Goods*, pp. 96, 96.

describe it—he just points believers to God’s great gift at Calvary as the basis for giving under Grace.

This principle of giving to help others is seen further in other New Testament passages, but we note only these two additional [sic] statements: (1) believers are exhorted to distribute “to the necessity of saints” (Rom. 12:13); and (2) the rich are instructed to “do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate” (I Tim. 6:18).¹

Thus it is seen that New Testament giving is not restricted, but that the believer is given all the liberty which he may desire. The pattern is the same as in the Old Testament—the tithe is specified for the Lord’s work and nothing else, while at the same time the believer may give as much to other causes over and above the tithe as he desires and as his giving is in accordance with his prosperity. Such giving is in perfect agreement with the Grace principle, for it is rooted in love for the Lord.²

¹ For additional Scripture passages on giving see Appendix A.

² For the non-tithing views see Appendix B.

SUMMARY

SUMMARY

In studying the scriptural tithe we have attempted to trace it from the earliest records of Scripture that the totality of the teaching may be clearly seen and its influence on our day may be properly evaluated. In doing this it was necessary to notice that even prior to the first specific mention of the tithe men apparently worshipped God in a two-fold way: (1) with material gifts, and (2) with blood sacrifices. The universality of these practices, even among the heathen, seemingly indicates that they worshipped in this pattern in accordance with an original revelation which antedates our present records. However, in speaking of Abraham's life of faith, it is said that he obeyed God's voice. Hence Abraham had some kind of instructions which he faithfully followed as he walked before the Lord. By virtue of this statement the possibility of pre-Abrahamic revelations from God is clearly seen and the most reasonable explanation for the worship practiced by humanity from earliest antiquity is easily accounted for.

Cain and Abel provide the first recorded instance of men offering gifts to the Lord. In view of the Hebrew word for "offering" it seems best to understand that what they presented to the Lord was not a sin sacrifice, but rather a gift from the increase of their produce and flocks. The usual word for sin "sacrifice" is not used to describe their

act, but the word for “gift” or “tribute” is used to identify their worship. Furthermore, since they brought their gifts at the end of what seemingly was an extended period of time, it appears as though they were recognizing the Lord with a proportion of the natural increase of their crops and flocks. The tithe is not mentioned in this context, but since tithing was an almost universal practice among the heathen, it is recognized that this could have been the tithe. Certainly it would not be surprising if the Lord had given instructions concerning tithing from the time of Eden, for that could explain the heathen practice. Even though the act of Cain and Abel is not described as the tithe, at least the principle of giving material gifts to the Lord seems to have been established.

The blood sacrifice is not mentioned until much later, when Noah offered burnt-offerings immediately upon leaving the Ark. Why he did this we are not told, but again the most reasonable explanation is that he followed the instructions of a previous revelation. Thus it is seen that from the very earliest records the two phases of worship have been observed — men have given both gifts and sacrifices to the Lord.

Abraham practiced both forms of worship when he tithed to Melchizedek and when he offered Isaac as a burnt-offering. Since the Scripture definitely states that he was justified by faith and not by works, it is manifest that he did not live under a legal system, but rather on a Grace basis. Therefore, his tithing cannot be considered as legalism even though it is said of him that he obeyed the Lord’s voice and

kept His charge. But in appreciation to the Lord for His goodness and protection in the military campaign Abraham gave the tithe to God's high priest, Melchizedek. Hence we see him tithing on the highest plane, not through the compulsion of a law, but out of a grateful heart. Furthermore, in that tithe he recognized the Lord as the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth. Hence his tithe was a token in recognition of God's ownership of all things. It should not be overlooked that he gave the tithe to the Lord's servant, for this has been a characteristic feature of tithing from that day to this. Thus it is very clear that tithing was begun long before Moses gave the Law.

The practice of the voluntary tithe was continued by Jacob as an act of homage before God and as a recognition of His ownership. Furthermore, it is evident that the intent of Jacob was that he would tithe for the extent of his life and not just for the one occasion or for the journey immediately ahead of him. Nothing is said concerning Abraham whether it was a life-time practice, but the implication is that he probably did observe it constantly, for the writer of Hebrews says that Melchizedek received tithes of Abraham. Thus it appears that Abraham tithed more than once and it is possible that he did it regularly.

When Moses received the Law from Jehovah it had incorporated within it the two ancient religious practices of the tithe and animal sacrifices. Nothing could be more natural than that this should take place, for undoubtedly the Jews were familiar with these practices since they antedated

the Law and were so universally practiced by the heathen as well. Not only was the original tithe principle made a vital part of the Mosaic legal system, but two other tithes were also added to it. The first tithe was specified as being the Lord's, but the Lord instructed that it should be given to the Levites and that it was to be the means of support for the Levites and priests since they had no inheritance in Israel. Thus the principle that it was to be given to the Levites and priests was but a continuation of Abraham's recognition of Melchizedek as God's representative.

The Levitical tithe was not all, for a second tithe was designated to be used for the support of the worshipper's families at the various annual feasts. A third tithe was to be set aside in their home communities every third year for the purpose of alleviating the lot of the widow and the fatherless, etc. Hence the total of these tithes plus the various sacrifices and offerings caused a Jew to give about one-third of his income every third year. Thus the Jew's religion really was a generous religion in the realm of giving. By this means a high standard of giving was established which is a real challenge to anyone who desires to give at least as much as the Jew was obligated to give. Such giving by the Jew was strictly on a legal basis with an appropriate penalty for failure to keep the Law at every point. Hence this system of giving was seen to be the exact opposite from the giving of Abraham and Jacob. It should be noted further that the second and third tithes were distinctly Mosaic, for they were added to the basic law. Thus they belonged only to

the legal system and apparently were added to the first tithe to meet the special and peculiar situations which were characteristic of the Law.

As we moved into the New Testament to learn what it has to say on our subject it was seen that our Lord endorsed the tithe in his day which was at the close of the Law dispensation. Therefore, since He merely supported tithing as required by the Law, there is no argument from His teaching which could rightly be taken to teach tithing for today.

Two passages in the New Testament epistles were seen to be a strong possibility for teaching tithing as a principle for this day of Grace. In analyzing I Cor. 9:13, 14 an analogy was noted between the practice of supporting the Levites and priests of the Temple with the Christian workers who are engaged in ministering the Gospel. The analogy states that as the Levites were supported by the holy things of the Temple (the tithe) even so were those who are ministering the Gospel to be supported. Our analysis of the phrase "even so" in the Greek showed that its apparent meaning is, "in the like manner spoken of also." Therefore, it seems that Paul is saying that the same principle of the tithe which is operative in the case of the Levites and priests is also operative for the Christian worker today.

The second New Testament passage which we studied was Heb. 7:8 especially in the light of the context of the Epistle to the Hebrews. It was seen that this verse indicates that Melchizedek is receiving tithes in some way today. How that could come to pass was noted in that Melchizedek is a type of

Christ as the everliving Son of God. Therefore, his priesthood ever lives and since Christ is a priest forever after the Melchizedekian order, this is proof that the Levitical priesthood and the Law have been superseded in Christ. It is further stated that every high priest has a two-fold ministry in the offering of both gifts and sacrifices. Since that is true, then Christ as a high priest must perform those two functions also. His death on the Cross satisfied the ministry of sacrifice, and his ministry in gifts was seen to be very likely in tithes. That He probably receives tithes today was noted because He is the antitype of Melchizedek. Since Heb. 7:8 says Melchizedek receives tithes today, that could be fully understood only by the Antitype, for He is the High Priest today. Thus by this means the Christian can tithe to the Lord who is the High Priest ministering in the heavenly sanctuary.

Therefore from these two strong passages there seems to be ample justification that the New Testament teaches tithing as a principle to be practiced today for the support of those engaged in the ministry of the Gospel.

How all of this is to be related to the Christian was seen to be accomplished in a very practical manner, for today tithing was observed to be a spiritual exercise and not ceremonial as it was under the Law. Tithing was seen to be no more legal than any other command under Grace, such as baptism, etc. Under the Law commands were to be obeyed because of the legal nature of the Law and the sanctions or penalties which fell upon those who violated the statutes. Under Grace the

commands are kept because of the believer's love for his Lord and his desire to do His will as it is found in the whole Bible. Hence tithing as a command under Grace in no way can be construed to be a return to legalism.

Storehouse tithing is mentioned only in connection with the Old Testament Temple worship. Hence it is problematical whether it can be carried over into the New Testament and made to apply to the local church. But the problem seems to disappear when it is noted that the Temple was a type of the true Temple in heaven and not a type of the local church on earth. Therefore, since it seems that the Christian is to tithe for the support of the Gospel ministry; since it is to be a spiritual exercise and not ceremonial; and furthermore since the true Temple is in heaven; then it would seem that there is no one earthly place into which the tithe is to be deposited. The tithe is to be given to the Lord's work as unto Him personally, since He ministers as the true High Priest in the true Temple in Heaven.

In as much as the Law was only a temporary rule of life, then the various provisions which were distinctly Mosaic would be superseded with the passing of that Law. Therefore, in the case of the tithe, the prior law principle would operate when the Law had run its course. The ancient principle of the tithe which antedated the Law would not be altered in any way by the Law, but the second and third tithes would cease with the end of the Law. The storehouse idea, also, would end with the passing away of the Law since it, too, was an institution associated only with the Law.

Thus the operation of the prior law would leave the original tithing principle unchanged to function in the day of Grace. Hence, the tithing principle which preceded the Law, at least as far back as the time of Abraham, cannot be justly designated as a legal principle if it is practiced today. Therefore through the operation of the principle of the prior law and on the basis of the New Testament teaching, tithing apparently is to be recognized as God's plan for our day.

Since tithing apparently is a part of the believer's life under Grace, it becomes just as much subject to the leading of the Holy Spirit as any other area of Christian living. Therefore, the believer must needs seek the Spirit's direction concerning where to place His tithe. Since the local church is so prominent in the New Testament and since it is at the very center of all true ministry of the Gospel, it seems only logical and morally right that the local church's ministry should not suffer but should take first place in the believer's disbursement of the Lord's tithe. After this responsibility is fully met then other Gospel agencies may be considered either through the channel of the local church or directly to the work involved. This is true Grace tithing as it is done under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, and it is a ministry which requires true spiritual insight in order to have it function to the glory of the Lord. Although the tithe is designated as the Lord's and it is intended to be used only for the ministry of the Gospel, such giving is merely the minimum, not the maximum. Beyond

the tithe the believer is free to give as the Lord prospered him. It is in this area where the real challenge comes to those who say we ought to do no less than the Jew did under the Law. Every third year the Jews gave about one-third of their income and the other two years about one-fifth of their income. Grace sets no maximum limit, but apparently the tithe is the minimum as far as a commandment is concerned.

Therefore, the sum of the matter seems to be that from the beginning it has been God's intent that man should give gifts to Him as a token in recognition of God's ownership of all things. At first no definite proportion was designated in the Scripture record. However, the tenth easily could have been that proportion, for the heathen so largely practiced it that such a practice has no satisfactory explanation except in an original revelation from God.

When the Scripture does speak of a proportion it is only the tenth. From the time of Abraham through the era of the Law it is clear that tithing was the proper proportion. Prior to the Law it was practiced on the faith basis while during the Law tithing was incorporated into the legal system. Thus when the Law ended, the tithe principle did not necessarily cease, for as a divinely given principle its beginning was rooted in antiquity which preceded the Law.

Therefore, the tithe principle was free to operate in the day of Grace, and as it was done throughout the Old Testament, even so apparently the Lord has designated it as the means for sustaining those who minister in spiritual things today. That would mean that the tithe is intended to provide

the financial basis for propagating the Gospel. Since the Holy Spirit is to direct the details of the lives of Christians, then likewise He is to direct the proper giving of the tithe. Therefore, this type of tithing is seen to be on a higher plane than Abraham's experience or the Jew's experience under the Law. Their tithing was not administered under the direction of the Holy Spirit, but today the Christian is expected to experience Holy Spirit directed tithing. Hence this is tithing in exact conformity with the Grace principle. Thus progressive revelation is seen in action and the precise unity of the Bible is clearly in evidence.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

OTHER SCRIPTURES ON GIVING

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There are quite a number of other Scripture passages which deal with various phases of giving, but which do not in themselves speak of the tithe. In view of the recipients involved, however, several of the passages could pertain to the tithe, but nothing in the immediate context so designates it. Although these other references to giving are somewhat isolated in the Bible, still they should not be thought of as unimportant to that subject. Since they contribute nothing to the development of the subject of the scriptural tithe we have not considered them previously, but we place some of them here so that something of the scope of these gifts may be seen. This list is not exhaustive, but merely is an attempt to show something of the breadth of the subject of giving in the New Testament.

Acts 4:32-37. — The early believers sold their possessions and pooled their resources so that the needs of all would be supplied.

Acts 6:1; I Tim. 5:16. — Apparently widows, who because of age or care of children are not able to earn their living, are to be supported by the gifts of the Lord's people. However the principle in I Tim. 5:16 should be observed where applicable.

Acts 20:35. – The weak are to be provided for on the basis of a traditional utterance of the Lord as stated here by the Apostle Paul. These “weak” easily could be the sick and infirm who are unable to help themselves.

Rom. 15:26. – This apparently refers to the same offering as in I Cor. 16:1-3; and II Cor. 8 and 9 where Paul is seeking help for needy saints in Jerusalem.

I Tim. 5:8-16. – Financial responsibility for the believer’s next-of-kin is stated here. However this certainly does not imply that loafers must be supported in this fashion simply because they are blood relation. Undoubtedly this refers only to those who are needy and worthy.

I Pet. 4:9. – Hospitality toward strangers is enjoined by Peter.

In view of our previous analysis of the tithe, the above Scripture passages certainly would not pertain to it, for their purpose is not the support of the Gospel message. Therefore, this type of giving would be from the nine-tenths and would involve that which is outside the tithe.

The following three passages, because of the recipients, could involve the tithe, but the context in no case states it that way.

Gal. 6:6-10. – The Bible teacher apparently is in view and Paul instructs believers to share with him. The word “communicate” means to have or share in common and thus refers to the support of the teachers who give themselves wholly to the teaching of the Word. This certainly could refer to the tithe and it could include such institutions as

Bible institutes, seminaries, and similar training schools for Christian workers.

I Tim. 5:17. – Financial support for the elders is provided especially for those that “rule well” and who “labour in the word and doctrine.” In modern practice this denotes the pastor of the church who legitimately should receive his support from the tithes of the Lord’s people.

III Jo.5-7. – The “brethren” and “strangers” mentioned here apparently are travelling missionaries who depend on the Lord’s people for support, for it is said that they take “nothing from the Gentiles.” This, likewise, could refer to their expectation to receive financial sustenance from the tithes of believers.

APPENDIX B

NON-TITHING VIEWS

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NON-TITHING VIEWS

Introduction

Before concluding our subject it is necessary that the non-tithing views shall be examined in order that we may see the two sides of this controversial subject. It should be observed that both the proponents and the opponents of the tithe principle appeal to the Scriptures as the basis for their views. Hence each view must be weighed carefully in the light of the Scripture evidence if one is to formulate a proper judgment. In this chapter it is proposed to describe the teaching of the non-tithing adherents so that it may be compared with the tithing view already presented. By this means a fair appraisal may be made as to the relative strength of the two views.

Those who oppose the teaching that believers in the day of Grace are expected to pay tithes to the Lord do so by showing a two-fold error in the arguments of the advocates of that teaching. They point out that the error arises from (1) “a misapplication of the law of Moses,” and (2) from “a supposed universal responsibility to tithe stemming from the existence of the tithe before the law was given.”¹ Thus the

¹ Stedman, loc. cit., CVII, No. 427 (July - September, 1950), 321.

non-tithing view recognizes that the Old Testament teaches tithing, but that it is restricted to the people prior to the Cross. Furthermore this view holds that subsequent to the Cross in the New Testament there is no instruction to tithe, but that believers are merely taught to give in conformity to the principle of Grace. Thus there is no specified proportion as a guide for that giving. We shall now consider the development of the teaching of the non-tithers and evaluate it in the light of our previous findings.

The Tithe and Cain and Abel

It is maintained that the sacrifices of Cain and Abel did not involve the giving of a tithe or even suggest such an act, but rather that they were to have been blood sacrifices for sin. It is pointed out that the King James Version makes no mention of tithing, for it is the first-fruits unto Jehovah which are offered as the sacrifice. Grier writes that "Those who would teach the tithe from this portion can only go to the Septuagint reading of this portion"¹ and follow the faulty translation which Lansdell gives of Genesis 4: 6, 7:

And the Lord said to Cain, wherefore did thy countenance fall? If thou didst rightly offer, and didst not rightly divide, didst thou not sin? Hold thy peace.²

From this translation Lansdell concludes that Cain's sin did not involve the type of offering, but that he sinned in not

¹ James Murray Grier, Giving In The Church Age (Unpublished thesis, Baptist Bible Seminary, 1956), p. 7.

² Lansdell, op. cit., p. 41.

rightly dividing the offering – in other words Cain’s sin lay in the fact that he failed to tithe.

Objection is raised (and rightly so) to this translation of the Septuagint since Lansdell unexplainably omits translating the negative in the first phrase, which should be translated: “If thou didst not rightly offer and didst not rightly divide, didst thou not sin?”¹ Therefore, from this translation it is concluded that Cain’s sin was twofold: (1) he did not present a sin offering of a blood sacrifice, and (2) he did not properly distribute it in the sense that it was not of the first-fruit of his crop. On the other hand Abel offered a blood sacrifice for sin and it was rightly divided or distributed since it was of the firstlings of his flock. Therefore no hint of the tithe is to be found in these acts of Cain and Abel, for in both instances they should have been blood sacrifices for sin.

In evaluating this view concerning Cain and Abel we would call attention to our previous analysis of the Scripture that is involved.² It was pointed out in that discussion that at the present time the best available text is the Massoretic since it has not been demonstrated satisfactorily that the Septuagint is more reliable. Therefore, working with that text as the basis it was shown that the Hebrew word for “offering” is not that which designates the expiatory sacrifice, but that it is the more general term which expresses

¹ Grier, *op. cit.*, p. 8; Stedman, *loc. cit.*, p. 329. Underscoring is mine.

² See Chapter I.

the idea of gift. Hence these sacrifices would be gifts expressive of gratitude to God for His bountiful provisions. Thus this type of offering had in it an element similar to the tithe and we can see in the offerings of Cain and Abel an expression of gratitude to God for the increase which had resulted from their physical labor. It is true that the tithe as such is not designated in the text; however the idea of a tithe payment to God is in closer agreement with the text than is the idea of an expiatory sacrifice.

Furthermore the fact that when they presented their offerings to Jehovah one was accepted while the other was not requires some kind of a standard as the basis for Jehovah's decisions. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that some kind of instructions stated the norm by which Cain and Abel were to have been guided in their relationship with God. This early revelation also becomes an adequate explanation for the almost universal practice of tithing among the heathen peoples of antiquity and we can see more clearly how the offerings of Cain and Abel could have been of the nature of the tithe. We do not press the point absolutely that they offered a tithe, for the Scripture does not so designate their actions, but we do emphasize that since the offerings apparently were not expiatory in nature, then they easily could have been a tithe. At least it cannot be safely denied that tithing began in their day and that the ancient practice of the heathen tithe also stems from their instructions.

Therefore, we agree with the opponents of tithing that the tithe is not mentioned in the record of Cain and Abel, but

we differ with them when they affirm that “this does not even infer tithing.”¹ A fair analysis does show that the idea of the tithe does not violate the teaching of the passage and that the tithe principle easily could have had its beginning at this point in the history of the human race.

The Tithe And Abraham

In discussing the tithe prior to the Mosaic Law, Stedman makes the following conciliatory statement:

It is encouraging to note that not all the tithe-payers rely upon a misapplication of the Mosaic commandments to support their practice. Many feel the weight of the arguments that the law is not binding upon the Christian and look elsewhere in Scripture for texts to bolster their practice. They are not slow to point out that there are instances of tithing before the law was given, and because of these they maintain tithing is a universal responsibility.²

Thus Stedman directs our attention to the scriptural record of tithing prior to the Mosaic Law and by this means he opens the way for us to consider the view of the non-tithing expounders concerning Abraham and the tithe.³

Both views of tithing readily recognize that Abraham paid tithes and that the practice apparently was of ancient origin. But, as Stedman notes, “though agreement can be obtained

¹ Grier, op. cit., p. 9; cf. also Stedman, loc. cit., p. 328.

² Stedman, Ibid. The present writer does not base tithing for the Christian upon the Law, neither does he base it upon the pre-Mosaic practice, but he finds an adequate New Testament basis for it as shown in Chapters VII-IX of this dissertation.

³ We are indebted largely to Stedman for the materials upon which this expression of the view of the opponents of tithing is based. Ibid., pp. 329-333.

on the facts it is not always possible to agree on the conclusions drawn from those facts.”¹ However, in the light of our consideration of Abraham in Chapters II and III we are not satisfied that the opponents have considered all of the facts; consequently their conclusions are not justified in every case, by the record.

The non-tithing view may be expressed by the following declarations.² (1) It is maintained that neither the Genesis nor the Hebrews account indicates that Abraham was under obligation to tithe, but that he paid tithes simply out of gratitude for the marvelous victory. Therefore this incident has nothing to do with tithing by any other people. (2) There is no inference to be drawn that he regularly paid tithes of all of his substance. (3) There is no analogy between this passage (Gen. 14:17-24) to show that Christ as the antitype of Melchizedek should receive tithes. Neither did Christ give any such instructions to His disciples. (4) It is denied that Abraham is a type of the Christian and therefore that his tithing proves that the believer, today, should tithe. The advocates of this view assert that Abraham is merely “an example of one who is justified by faith, as against a false thought of being justified by the works of the law.”³ It is pointed out that the saints of all dispensations have been justified in exactly the same way. Therefore since that is true what becomes of Abraham as a type of

¹Ibid., p. 330.

²Ibid., pp. 330-332.

³Ibid., p. 331.

the Church saints? Although Abraham was saved by grace and lived before the Mosaic Law, this cannot “be made to mean that his life was governed by the same gracious principles that apply only to the members of Christ’s body, the church.”¹ Furthermore it may be said that in a real sense he was “under law,” for in Genesis 26:5 we are told: “Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.” Therefore Stedman concludes that whatever “may have been binding upon Abraham is not, by any means, necessarily obligatory to Christians.”² Hence there can be no connection between Abraham’s tithing practice and this day of Grace, for “Abraham’s rule of life is different from that of the church-saint.”³

Our evaluation of this view of the Abrahamic tithe is in agreement with the basic truth that the rule of life for Abraham is not the rule of life for believers today. However, that being true, it must be borne in mind also that God is not prohibited [sic] thereby from incorporating certain features of one rule of life into subsequent rules of life. The principle of sacrifice for sin was practiced under the rule of life preceding the Mosaic Law; the same principle became a vital part of the rule of life under the Law; and in the sacrifice of Christ upon Calvary that principle is basic to the rule of life under Grace. Likewise tithing could be similarly incorporated

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 332

³ Grier, op. cit., p. 12

in as many rules of life as sovereignly determined by Jehovah.

In our previous chapters II and III we have explained in detail the Abrahamic tithe. Therefore at this time we shall answer concisely, in the same order, the points made by the non-tithing view concerning Abraham and his tithe. (1) It is true that the account itself does not indicate that Abraham was under obligation to present a tithe, but it must be remembered that nowhere are we told the features of Abraham's rule of life. Therefore we are in no position to judge irrefutably whether or not he was under obligation to tithe. However Genesis 26:5 does say that he obeyed God's instructions. In view of the character of the man Abraham it is more reasonable to believe that he tithed in obedience to Jehovah's instructions rather than that it was a spontaneous act with no real meaning behind it. (2) In determining whether Abraham regularly tithed it should be noted that the writer of Hebrews uses the plural number of the word tithe in 7:6, 9 in such a way as to indicate that Abraham did it more than once — there is no reason why it could not have been a regular practice with him. (3) True, we have no record of Christ teaching His disciples concerning the tithe, but in Hebrews, chapter seven, Christ is described as the antitype of Melchizedek, the type. Therefore He is placed in the position of receiving tithes even as Melchizedek did.¹ (4) In our analysis of this subject of the tithe we have traced it

¹ See Chapter VII in which we discuss this with reference to Heb. 7:8.

through the entire Scripture record in order to see the tithe in all of its scriptural features. Hence whether Abraham is a type of the Christian does not establish the teaching of the tithe, for it is founded upon New Testament passages.¹ In other words tithing is seen to be a feature of the rule of life under Grace just as much as it was a feature under Abraham's rule of life and even as it was also a feature under the Mosaic rule of life. Thus there really is no conflict even if tithing is a principle associated with several rules of life, for in each instance it is properly correlated into the particular system of life in which it is found.

The Tithe And Jacob

The non-tithing advocates do not give much consideration to Jacob's promise to tithe (Gen. 28:20-22) because they consider that it was a cunning attempt on his part to bargain with the mercy of Jehovah. Stedman reveals his reaction by declaring: "This passage reflects such a low spiritual and moral position as to render it scarcely worth refuting."² It is claimed that since a vow is by nature a voluntary act, then it was insolent of Jacob to offer to give what God had a right to withhold. Thus Jacob's attempts to buy God's blessings reveal the shallowness of his spiritual character. Therefore whatever Jacob felt free to vow or not to vow can not be made compulsory to any believer especially the Christian.

¹ See Chapters VII-IX.

² Stedman, loc. cit., p. 332.

If this is the correct interpretation of Jacob's promise, it certainly does not seem to merit much refutation. Our evaluation of Jacob has been given previously¹ and in that discussion it was pointed out that Jacob was not cunningly trying to bargain with God. On the contrary his act was seen to be the response of faith to the Lord's promises – the essence of his sacrifice was not ceremonial, but spiritual. His pledge of the tithe was proof that he recognized the Lord as the giver of everything and a careful analysis of the context indicates that Jacob intended to tithe for the extent of his life. As the grandson of Abraham it is only reasonable to conclude that the reason he promised to tithe was the direct fruitage of his previous teaching. Thus although Christians are not necessarily to tithe because Jacob did, still his case is one more proof that the practice of tithing was known and observed by believers prior to the time of Moses and the day of Grace. Therefore tithing cannot properly be labeled legalism under such circumstance.

The Tithe And The Mosaic Law

It is this area of the subject of tithing where the opponents make a powerful case against the advocates who are guilty of mixing Law and Grace. The opponents are quick to point out the error and fallacy of predicating a practice for today upon the practice of the Mosaic legal system. This condemnation is scripturally justified and is concurred in by this writer. Thus it is probably at this point where we find

¹ See Chapter IV.

the area of our greatest agreement with the opponents of tithing as a proper scriptural practice for today. The mixing of Law and Grace is rejected as unscriptural. In the discussion which shall follow we shall establish the basic features of the opponents' view concerning the tithe and the Law¹ and present our own reaction to it.

The Tithe a Part of the Law

All students of the subject of the scriptural tithe have no difficulty in agreeing that the Law of Moses made tithing compulsory upon Israel and that it was an important factor in the economy of that nation. It is further recognized that the tithe was the Divine plan for supporting and maintaining God's priests and the Temple services. Although these things are freely admitted, Stedman rightly says:

But it is quite another thing to take that which belonged to the nation, Israel, and which supported a group of robed and mitred priests, who offered daily blood sacrifices for the remission of the sins of one nation, and apply it to a heterogenous body of Jews and Gentiles in which each individual is himself a priest, who rest for eternity upon the once-for-all offering of the Lamb of God, and whose message is to be preached to every creature under heaven. This is, indeed, a different matter. Yet despite these evident distinctions scores of books and pamphlets roll from the presses each year in which tithing is declared to be the only scriptural method of giving, which specious claim is supported by frequent references to Jewish commandments.²

In view of our previous discussion³ it will be immediately recognized that we are in agreement with this view, for

¹ Stedman's presentation will be used as the basis for this discussion of the non-tithing viewpoint of this important phase of the subject. Loc. cit., pp. 321-328.

² Ibid., p. 322

³ See Chapters V and VIII

we hold no brief for the tithing position which claims the Law, or any part of it, as the basis for that view; We do not condone the failure to differentiate in the Bible that which belongs to Israel from that which belongs to the church. Therefore we reject any tithing view which is built upon the Law, for there must be some other basis if tithing is valid for today.

The Law a Rule of Life

The opponents of tithing properly point out that the Mosaic Law comprising the Decalogue, the moral commandments, and the ordinances constituted a complete rule of life for the Jewish nation. Hence there can be no proper treatment of the tithe which does not recognize that it was an integral part of that law. Therefore, it is carefully maintained that the Law was a merit system offering rewards for obedience and exacting severe penalties for disobedience. "This legal character is everywhere opposed, in the New Testament, to the teachings of grace"¹ and the New Testament also positively declares that the Law is done away as a rule of life for the Christian since he has been placed under the rule of Grace.

Those who hold this view object (and rightly so) to the position of some tithing advocates who hold that only a part of the Law was done away and that the moral requirements of the Law are still binding. Stedman declares this to be pure folly and that it is failure "to view either the law or grace as a complete rule of life," thus "suggesting that one

¹ Stedman, loc. cit., p. 323.

must borrow from the other in order to subsist.”¹ Then he continues by saying, “It is true that certain principles are common to each system, but neither requires any portion of the other to complete it.”²

It is precisely this same view which we have already presented in Chapter VIII whereby it was shown that the Law as a rule of life is not the rule of life under Grace. Furthermore, Stedman has well said (and we agree with him) that “certain principles are common to each system, but neither requires any portion of the other to complete it.”³ Chafer also states this view as follows:

In applying the teachings of grace it is legitimate to point out that a similar principle obtained under the Law of Moses, thus to demonstrate that the precept in question represents the unchangeable character of God; but it is both unscriptural and unreasonable to apply the teachings of the Mosaic system directly to the children of grace. Since both the Law of Moses and the teachings of grace are complete in themselves, neither one requires the addition of the other, and to combine them is to sacrifice all that is vital in each.⁴

By these statements, then, these writers have opened the way to say that if God chose to include the tithe principle among the rules of life under Law and Grace, He could do so without violating the two systems—He could make the principle of the tithe common to both. It is precisely at this point where we are now compelled to disagree with the

¹Ibid., p. 324

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴ Lewis Sperry Chafer, Systematic Theology (Dallas, Texas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947), IV, 243.

opponents of tithing, for they have erred in assuming that tithing today is a return to legalism – they fail to recognize that God has included the principle of the tithe in the rule of life under Grace. In Chapter VII we have demonstrated the New Testament teaching on the tithe, thus showing that it is one principle, among many, which has been included in more than one rule of life. Therefore the key objection to tithing today has been shown to be fallacious, for the tithe principle has been demonstrated to be a New Testament principle in the rule of life under Grace. Thus there is no possibility of confusing Law and Grace in this area of teaching and the objection that tithing is a return to legalism is found to be groundless.

The opponents of tithing make another point in connection with the Law as a rule of life by declaring that the tithe under the Law was a debt payable only to God, hence it was not a gift. Furthermore it is stated that “Grace cancels all debts and accepts only gifts. The tithe was a part of the law. Grace has abolished law.”¹

It has been recognized previously that Grace has abolished the Law as a rule of life for the believer, but it is seriously questioned if it is scriptural to say there is no debt under Grace. Certainly it is true that salvation is “not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph. 2:9), but it is also true that believers are “His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained

¹ Stedman, loc. cit., p. 325.

that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). Such works are the responsibility of the believer because he is saved and therefore they comprise a debt payable to the Lord. They are performed in appreciation for what the Lord has done for him, and out of a heart motivated by love the believer keeps the Lord's commandments not for justification, but as a demonstration of sanctification. Stewardship is a matter of responsibility to the Lord and "it is required of the steward that he should be found faithful" (I Cor. 4:2). When the Apostle Paul wrote that we "are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (I Cor. 6:20) did he not indicate that believers are indebted to the Lord to live a life consistent with their position? The believer owes the Lord all that he is and expects to be. Tithing as taught in the New Testament is no less a matter of stewardship than any other responsibility, or debt to the Lord. Such stewardship debts are paid as stated above, not as a means for justification, but as a demonstration of the believer's sanctification. Thus it is pointless to say that "Grace cancels all debts and accepts only gifts."¹

The Tithe and the Sabbath

In many instances tithe advocates unite the tithe law to Sabbath observance and speak of them as twin laws² which

¹Ibid.

² Alber, op. cit., p. 15.

are still in effect. The opponents of tithing object to this and rightly call it error when such practices are based upon the Mosaic Law, for then they could have no standing in Grace. It has been shown already that the tithe principle for today is based not upon the Law but upon the New Testament. Therefore any tithe advocates who take this position are not to be condemned, but commended. However, any who join Sabbath-keeping with the tithe have the burden of proof to establish a New Testament basis for the Sabbath in the same way as it has been done for the tithe.

It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to enter into a detailed discussion of the Sabbath, but suffice it to say that as far as this writer is aware there is no comparable New Testament teaching for the Sabbath principle as there is for the tithe. It is apparent that the Jewish Sabbath ended with the ceasing of the Law for the Christian.¹ The Sabbath did not become a principle common to both Law and Grace as did the tithe – apparently the Lord saw fit to culminate the one principle and to continue the other for today. Hence we agree with the opponents of the tithe in their objection to linking the Sabbath and the tithe as twin laws for believers under Grace, for those two laws do not stand or fall together – each stands or falls on its own scriptural merit.

¹ It should be noted that the Scripture indicates that anyone (Jew or Gentile) who places himself under the Law is still responsible to keep the Law in its every detail – this would include keeping the Sabbath and the many other legal provisions (cf. Gal. 3:10; Jas. 2:10). But for the Christian the Mosaic Law has ceased to function.

Opponents ask questions such as the following concerning the payment of the tithe:

The very passages which they [tithe advocates] call to their support explicitly [sic] state that the tithe is to be paid to the Levites; but where are they to be found today? Further the tithe is expressly designated for the support of the priesthood; but when every believer is a priest to whom is it to be paid? It may be noted, too, that the blessings promised to the obedient tither were all of a physical or material nature; but the Christian under grace is said to be blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ (Eph. 1:3).¹

In answering these questions it should be borne in mind that it has been affirmed already that tithing is not based upon the Law, but upon New Testament teaching. Therefore, there is no need to ask, “where are the Levites?” etc. There is no problem here, for in Chapters VII and VIII it has been seen that the tithe still belongs wholly unto the Lord and that it is given to the Lord when it is given for the support of the propagation of the Gospel. Those who “preach the Gospel” (I Cor. 9:14) are the Lord’s servants today even as the priests were in previous days – they are the rightful recipients of the tithe. Furthermore when a believer obeys the Lord’s instructions concerning the tithe motivated by his love for his Lord certainly he will receive the Lord’s blessings just as much as he will for obeying any other scriptural instructions. The real problem is to see that tithing is not legalism, but that it is in conformity with New Testament teaching. When that perspective is attained, the other questions will be adjusted easily.

¹ Stedman, loc. cit., p. 327.

The Tithe And The New Testament

“Grace-giving” is the term commonly used by the opponents of tithing to designate their understanding of the New Testament on the subject of giving for our day. It is predicated on the basis that there is no tithe teaching in the New Testament and that all giving is to be proportionate, but that the proportion is to be determined subjectively by each Christian. Thus there is no objective norm to guide the giver — he gives as he thinks it is good. Hence in this type of giving the believer may even tithe if he so desires, but he is not obligated to do so. The only objection raised against tithing is the obligatory character of the tithe; therefore it is rejected. Again we quote Stedman on this point:

It should be understood that none of the foregoing arguments is leveled against the practice of paying a portion of the income to God. [Then Stedman continues by saying that] . . . the New Testament teaches proportionate giving. There is, even, no quarrel with giving ten percent of the income. It is the obligatory character of the tithe which is attacked, and the tithe, as an institution, is inherently obligatory.¹

Thus it is evident that the major problem is to determine whether the New Testament teaches the tithe. If it does, then all of the argument over the question of legalism is easily settled. It would be apparent, then, that a command to tithe is no more legalism than is the command to baptize or to observe the Lord’s Supper, for it is recognized that commands and instructions do comprise a vital part of the features of the rule of life for the believer living under

¹Ibid., pp. 333, 334.

Grace. Such instructions become the objective norm by which the believer shall know the will of God for his life.

In explaining “grace-giving” the opponents of the tithe use two major passages of Scripture (I Corinthians 16: 1, 2 and II Corinthians 8, 9) as the basis for their New Testament teaching.¹ It is claimed that these passages declare a universal principle of proportionate giving and that this proportion is determined by the individual giver.

The purpose which lies back of Paul’s teaching reveals whether these verses comprise instruction for giving to maintain the Lord’s work or something else. Therefore we call attention to the fact that in both passages the purpose reveals that a special offering was to be sent to fellow believers [sic] in Jerusalem who were experiencing a financial depression. No hint is given that the offering was to be used for the propagation of the Gospel – it was merely a special offering for a special need and nothing more. When the need was met the offering would cease – this would be the very opposite to the continuing need of support for the Gospel ministry. Hence these passages cannot be instructions to the Christian for maintaining the Lord’s work of ministering His Word to the world.² Throughout the New Testament there are a number of isolated verses which deal in some way or other with various phases of the subject of giving, but none of them outline

¹ See Stedman, loc. cit., CVII, No. 428, pp. 468-480; Grier, op. cit., pp. 26-31; Robert Delos Wilson, Giving Under Grace (Unpublished thesis, Baptist Bible Seminary, 1954, pp. 24-37.

² See Chapter IX for a fuller discussion of these passages.

the New Testament teaching for the support of the Gospel ministry any more than do the previously noted passages in the Corinthian epistles.¹

Thus it is seen that the non-tithing adherents have presented no adequate program for New Testament giving for the support of the Lord's work. This fact in itself could suggest that there is a plan which they have overlooked. It is this plan which has been presented in detail in chapters VII and VIII of this dissertation. That plan is that the Lord's work should receive at least a tenth of the believer's income and as much more as he believes the Lord would have him to give — there is no limit to the amount which he may give above the tenth. Thus the New Testament has established a lower limit, but not an upper limit to giving that is acceptable to the Lord.

Is Tithing Christian?

This question states the approach which is taken by another opponent of tithing who does not attempt to build his case so much upon Scripture as upon reason. His answer to his own question is unequivocally stated in these words: "Tithing is good business and guarantees returns. But the question, Is tithing Christian? must be answered No."² This view was given as the conclusion to a controversial discussion of the subject of tithing. The writer introduced his subject by

¹ Many of these verses are briefly discussed in Appendix A. Also cf. Stedman, op. cit., CVIII, No. 429, pp. 68-73.

² Hiley H. Ward, "Is Tithing Christian?" The Christian Century, LXXIV, No. 7 (February 13, 1957): 194.

stating:

Obviously, tithing is good business for the church. It props up tottering budgets and adds new impetus to a streamlined financial program. But no one seems to be raising seriously the question we ought to ask first of all: Is tithing Christian? Before going overboard [in promoting tithing] the denominations need to consider whether this method of supporting the church is basic to our faith.¹

Certainly we must agree with Ward that this question does need to be answered, for if tithing is not Christian, then we should not advocate it. However, if on the other hand it is Christian, then we should teach and practice it. The answer to this question is the real thesis of this dissertation, but our conclusion is the very opposite to that which he has drawn. In this dissertation the analysis has been based upon all of the Scripture while Ward's use of Scripture is restricted to what he calls "Jesus teachings."

Ward's argument revolves around four questions. His first question is, "Did Jesus advocate tithing?" and his answer is in agreement with our previously stated view² that Jesus taught tithing to the Pharisees who were bound by the Law, but that this does not comprise a directive to Christians to tithe.

The second question is, "Is tithing moral?" His answer consists of quoting two writers who think tithing "brings in grave problems of moral theology"³ which he explains by quoting Jonathan G. Sherman: "People of tender conscience feel

¹Ibid., p. 193.

² See Chapter VII; cf. Ward, loc. cit.

³ Ward, loc. cit.

it a hardship if they have small incomes. Also, it sets a low standard for the rich.”¹ Thus apparently he accepts the view of the other writers as having established the “ineptness of tithing.” This type of reasoning could result only because it is not recognized that the New Testament teaches tithing. Consequently a conclusion has been formulated on the basis of rationalization.

Question number three asks, “Is tithing consistent with Jesus teaching?” and his answer is that the Christian’s “every act is spontaneous, springing from his faith, directed by the Spirit. This is also true of giving.”² He concludes the paragraph by asking, “Could it be that spontaneity and not proportion of income is the New Testament criterion of giving?”³ Thus again he has failed to recognize that the New Testament teaches tithing. Consequently he would make giving subjective rather than an act based upon an authoritative objective standard. Furthermore it should be pointed out that tithing should be directed by the Holy Spirit and when such is the case it will be done with spontaneity and joy because the tither knows that such giving is pleasing unto his Lord.

The fourth question is, “Does tithing bear fruit?” He recognizes that tithing “holds fruits of joy for the tither,”⁴ but he contends this is a subjective reaction and that such reaction does not justify making the practice of tithing normative

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

for all Christians. This is true — we do not want subjectivism. What we need to know is that the New Testament teaches tithing — then out of love for the Lord and a desire to please Him, the believer will observe His Lord's instructions faithfully.

In his concluding paragraphs under the heading of "Creative Giving,"¹ Ward rightly states that all that a person has (time, talent, resources) should be committed to the Lord. Then on the basis that "the old has passed away, behold, the new has come" (2 Cor. 5:17, R. S. V.) he declares that "A Christian has no need for invoking old laws. He is under a new law, a new covenant — the love of Christ."² Again it is recognized that Ward is correct in showing that a Christian should yield all that he is to the Lord, for that is exactly what a spiritually minded tither will do. But when he states that the old has passed away and the new has come he reveals that in the final analysis he opposes tithing because he considers it to be legalism — this, then, is really his main thesis. Hence it is not a new argument and since we have met it previously there is no need to answer it again. Suffice it to say that we have demonstrated tithing to be a proper New Testament teaching and practice, hence it has no taint of legalism whatsoever.

¹Ibid., p. 194

²Ibid. Underscoring is mine

Conclusion

In surveying the non-tithing views we have noted that the main argument which is advanced against tithing is that such a practice is at least a partial return to legalism. This argument has been amply refuted by the scriptural demonstration that the principle of the tithe has been incorporated as a specific feature of the rule of life under Grace even as it was also a vital feature in the prior rules of life. There is no problem here, for the Lord has incorporated the principle into each rule of life in accordance with the basis upon which each rule of life has been established. Thus tithing as it is taught in the New Testament is in perfect conformity to the Grace principle that out of love for and devotion to the Lord the believer joyously practices it as a part of the Lord's will for his life.

APPENDIX C

EARLY CHURCH OPINION

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Many students of the subject of New Testament giving fail to differentiate between the tithe for the Lord's work and offerings over and above the tithe which are to be used for special projects. All too frequently the passages which distinctly treat of the special offering are used to teach giving for the support of those who are engaged in the Gospel ministry – the purpose for the instruction contained in those passages is completely ignored. Consequently there is much confused thinking on the subject and as a result confusion reigns in the practice of giving.

The early church Fathers frequently were just as confused in this area of teaching and practice as many are today. As a group they did not recognize that the New Testament taught both tithing and offerings. In many instances they confused Law and Grace by appealing to the Mosaic practice as the basis for giving for our day. Furthermore they used I Corinthians 16:1, 2 and II Corinthians 8 and 9 as the teaching for Christian giving for support of the Gospel ministry. Thus it is obvious that there was no clear perception of the New Testament teaching.

In the next several pages it is purposed to demonstrate the views of some of the representative early church

Fathers.

Ante-Nicene Fathers

1. Irenaeus. — His view of the tithe probably should be stated as believing that none ought to set apart less than the tenth and those who would attain the highest point of duty would consecrate their all to the Lord; He understood that the Lord came to expand the Law; therefore instead of paying a tithe the Christian should “‘divide all one’s goods to the poor,’ which is not a dissolving of the law, but enlarging it.”¹ In contrasting the Jews and the Christians he said:

While they [the Jews] used to consider the tithes of their property as consecrated, they on the contrary, who have apprehended freedom [the Christians], decree to the uses of the Lord all things which they have, joyfully and freely giving, not what is less, inasmuch as they have a greater hope.²

2. Tertullian. — In the discourse, “Tertullian against Maricon,” it would seem that Tertullian recognized a dependence upon the Law in some sense when it comes to support for the Gospel ministry. When speaking of I Corinthians 9:13, 14 he calls attention to verse 10 where Paul says “it is written for our sakes” and he then says: “Thus he [Paul] showed that the law had a symbolic reference to ourselves, and that it gives its sanction in favor of those who live of the gospel.”³ A further comment which he makes is that those

¹ Quoted by Lansdell, op. cit., p. 192.

²Ibid.

³ Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (eds.), The Ante-Nicene Fathers (American reprint of the Edinburgh Edition, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956), III, 444.

who preach the gospel are sent by the same God "to whom belongs the law."¹ Thus apparently he sees some relation between the Law and the support of the Christian ministry, but at the same time through his use of I Corinthians 9:13, 14 he also recognizes that there is a proper means of support for those engaged in the Gospel ministry. However he does not analyze the passage to show its full teaching.

3. Clement of Alexandria. — According to his view the Mosaic Law concerning the tithe was binding upon the Christian, for he said that the Mosaic Law taught that worship of God was exercised "by giving Him the tithe of our [the Christian's] fruit and cattle."² He also recognized that Christians should give offerings to assist brethren who were in need. In his great work called Stromata he commended helping others and then quoted II Corinthians 8:12-14 in support of his declaration.³

4. Origen. — A strong testimony in favor of tithing is given by Origen and yet he, too, leans upon the Law for the basis. In his eleventh homily on Numbers 18 he says: "It is fit and profitable that firstfruits [tithes] be offered to the priests of the gospel also, for so also hath the Lord ordained, that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel."⁴ Thus it appears as though he may have had some

¹Ibid.

² Quoted by Lansdell, op. cit., p. 182.

³ Roberts and Donaldson, op. cit., II, 370.

⁴ Quoted by Lansdell, op. cit., p. 182.

concept that New Testament tithing is found in I Corinthians 9:13, 14, which he has just quoted. But he is not completely clear concerning the teaching, for later in the same homily he uses our Lord's words to the Pharisees (Lk. 11:42) to support the tithe: "What therefore He would have done by the Pharisees, much more, and with greater abundance, would he have fulfilled by His disciples."¹

5. Cyprian. – We note that he recognized that believers should assist each other when in need. In writing concerning the performing of works and alms he states that no matter how small the alms may be it is the spirit of willingness that is sufficient (II Cor. 8:12, 13).² He also connects the following references to the benefit which is to be derived from doing mercy to people (II Cor. 8:14, 15; 9:6, 7, 9-12).³ Thus Cyprian rightly does not associate these passages with the support of the Christian ministry, but he does use them in their proper context of assistance to those who are in need. His view of the tithe was legalistic, for he reasoned that since the Levites had no inheritance and were supported by tithes so also the clergy should be sustained: "Which reasoning and form is now held in matters affecting the clergy." He continued by saying that they should receive "from the altar as it were tithes from the fruits of the earth."⁴

¹Ibid., p. 183.

² Roberts and Donaldson, op. cit., V, 533.

³ Ibid., 532.

⁴ Quoted by Lansdell, op. cit., pp. 184, 185.

Post-Nicene Fathers

1. Jerome. — Here is another writer who places Christian tithing on a Jewish foundation, for his argument was that since the Temple priests were supported by the tithe, therefore believers should do a similar thing with reference to the church. He considered refusal to tithe as defrauding God. In his commentary on the third chapter of Malachi he declares:

What we have said of tithe and firstfruits given by the people of old to the priests and Levites, understand ye also for the people of the Church, to whom it is commanded. . . to give tithes and firstfruits . . . at least let us imitate the example of the Jews. . . . If any one shall not do this, he is convicted of defrauding and supplanting God.¹

2. Augustine. — The illustrious Augustine exhorted the people to practice tithing, but he also appealed to the practice of the Pharisees as a reason for his teaching. From his instruction concerning Psalm 146 we quote:

Set apart some portion of thy returns. Tithe will you? Set apart the tithe, though that be but little. For it was said, because the Pharisees gave tithes, "I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of everything whatever I possess." And he, in superiority to whom your righteousness in giving ought to rank, does give tithes; you, however, do not give even the thousandth part.²

Thus we note also how Augustine even rebuked the people for their failure to tithe.

His use of Scripture concerning giving is not as good as is to be desired, for he not only used the Law as a

¹Ibid., p. 190.

²Ibid., p. 187.

basis, but he applied to the support of the ministry a passage which speaks of special offering. He quotes II Corinthians 8:1-21 in a message on the work of Monks and says Paul wrote these words for “the care of the holy congregation to minister necessities to the holy servants of God, giving counsel in this, because this was profitable more to the persons themselves who did this, than to them towards whom they did it . . .¹On the other hand he did recognize that I Corinthians 16:1-4 pertained to supplying the needs of saints.² He also saw that I Corinthians 9:13-15 taught that Paul had the right to receive support from believers,³ but it is of interest to note that he did not associate this with the tithe.

3. Ambrose. — The Law apparently provided the framework for his view of tithing as seen in his statement in which he quotes Deuteronomy 14 and says:

It is not enough that we bear the name, if we do not the works, of Christians; and the Lord hath commanded that the tithe of all our fruits, cattle, etc. [be annually required].⁴

In a discourse on repentance he emphatically made tithing to be obligatory by saying:

Of all the substance which God gives man, He has reserved the tenth part to Himself, and therefore it is not lawful for a man to withhold that which God reserved to Himself. To thee He hath given nine parts; for Himself, however He hath reserved the tenth part,

¹ Philip Schaff (ed.), Nicene And Post-Nicene Fathers (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956), III, 513.

²Ibid., p. 518.

³Ibid., VI. 138.

⁴ Quoted by Lansdell, op. cit., p. 188

and if thou dost not give to God the tenth part, God will take away from thee the nine parts.¹

4. Gregory the Great. — An expression of his attitude is given in a sermon in which he not only pleads for the tithe of the Christian's income, but also for a tithe of his time: "As ye are bidden by the Lord to pay tithes of property so strive to offer Him also tithes of days."² No clue is given whether he based tithing upon the Law or the New Testament, but we would not be surprised if he followed the legal pattern which we have noted in the leaders who preceded him.

5. The First Council of Abbot Theonas. — In writing on the offering of tithes this man says that Christians should know that they are free from law and that whenever they offer tithes they "are still in a way ground down beneath the burden of the law and not able to rise to those heights of the gospel."³ Although he seems to see the fallacy of practicing the tithe in conformity to the teaching of the Law yet he is not entirely free from thinking in terms of the Law when he says:

And so if even those who, faithfully offering tithes of their fruits, are obedient to the more ancient precepts of the Lord, cannot yet climb the heights of the gospel, you can see very clearly how far short of it those fall who do not even do this. For how can those men be partakers of the grace of the gospel who disregard the fulfilment of the lighter commands of the law⁴ [as the tithe etc.]

¹Ibid., p. 189.

²Ibid., p. 190

³ Schaff, op. cit., XI, 504.

⁴Ibid.

Conclusion

In the light of these views of ten representative Ante and Post-Nicene Fathers it is seen that the early church largely favored the practice of tithing. On the basis of the evidence at hand there seems to have been no opposition to it, but the scriptural reason for tithing was not adequately presented. The pattern was that which is so widely held today, that we ought to do what Israel did – that under Grace we should do no less. However, it should be observed that they did not advocate the second and third tithes which the Jew also paid.

Furthermore it is to be observed that whenever they used New Testament passages which deal with the idea of a special offering they almost always applied them to the support of the Christian ministry – thus they missed the important teaching of those passages. None seem to have fathomed the New Testament teaching of the tithe. Therefore it is no great surprise that generally speaking the New Testament tithe is not understood even today.

APPENDIX D

GIVING AND SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISM

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The Seventh-day Adventists are especially well-known for their insistence upon tithing and Sabbath keeping. Both practices are based upon a belief that the Mosaic Law still is operative. This attitude is expressed under the heading of, "Perpetuity of the Law" wherein the question is asked: "What relation does a justified person sustain to the law?"¹ The answer which they give is Romans 2:13: "For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified." This is indicative of their confusion concerning the Law and its relation to the day of Grace. For the purpose of this dissertation it is not necessary that a study of their Sabbath teaching shall be made, but it will be helpful to a clearer perspective of the scriptural tithe if we identify the Adventist position concerning the tithe. This end can be achieved by quoting from their literature and from authors who have written concerning their system.

Tithing

In addition to the above quotation on the Law we shall

¹Bible Reading for the Home Circle (Washington, D. C.: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 1927), p. 377. Note: this book is one of the Adventist publications and it has 798 pages of questions and answers.

add the following which shall establish the legal position which the Adventists occupy.

The question is asked, "How comprehensive are these [the ten] commandments?" and the answer is a quotation from Ecclesiastes 12:13: "Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man."¹ Again it is asked: "What inspired tribute is paid to the law of God?" The answer is: "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul" (Ps. 19:7).² A third question inquires, "What blessing does the psalmist say attends the keeping of God's commandments?" and the answer is, "Moreover by them is Thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward" (Ps. 19:11).³ The fourth question which we shall note under the heading of "the Law of God" is: "What did Christ state as a condition of entering into life?" The answer given is: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments" (Mt. 19:17)."⁴ Since the tithe is a vital feature of the Mosaic Law it is readily seen why the Adventists stress the tithe, for they recognize that the whole Law (including the tithe) must be kept. Note still another question and answer at this point: "How many of the commandments is it necessary to break in order to become

¹Ibid., p. 369. The underscoring in these answers represents italicized words in the source material. Thus they mean such words are intended to be emphasized.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

come a transgressor of the law?" The answer is: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10).¹

With these things as a basis we turn our attention to another subject which they entitle, "Support of the Ministry,"² wherein is found their tithing instructions. It is to be noted that indiscriminately they take references from both the Old and New Testaments to establish the tithe for today – the Mosaic instructions are applicable to us in the light of this material. The following questions and answers establish their teaching:

1. What is one way in which we are commanded to honor God?

"Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase." Prov. 3:9.

2. What part of one's income has the Lord especially claimed as His?

"And all the tithe [tenth] of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's: it is holy unto the Lord." Lev. 27:30.³

Those who are to receive their support from the tithe are indicated by the following two questions and answers:

3. For whose support and for what work was the tithe devoted in Israel?

"Behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation." Num. 18:21.

4. In what language does Paul approve of the same method of support for the gospel ministry?

"... Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the Gospel." I Cor. 9:11-14.⁴

¹Ibid., p. 371.

²Ibid., pp. 657-659.

³Ibid., p. 657.

⁴Ibid.

One further statement concerning the relation of tithing to everlasting life is enlightening. Mrs. White says: "The system [of tithing] enjoined upon the Hebrews has not been repealed or relaxed by the One Who originated it. . . . Our heavenly Father bestows gifts and solicits a portion [a tithe] back, that He may test us whether we are worthy to have the gift of everlasting life."¹

Our evaluation of the Adventist view of the tithe is that in almost every particular it does not coincide with a correct analysis of Scripture. Fundamentally it errs in not distinguishing the dispensations, especially Law and Grace. The Adventists fail to observe that Paul wrote, "if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work" (Rom. 10:6). Thus they distort Scripture when they make the Law operative today with tithing based upon that Law. Tithing cannot be established upon Law; otherwise our day no longer could be called the day of Grace. Furthermore nowhere does the Scripture make tithing a test for salvation. That is a ridiculous claim in the face of the fact that salvation is by God's grace (Eph. 2:8, 9).

The one point where there is some agreement is in Paul's teaching that those who preach the Gospel are to live

¹ Quoted by E. B. Jones, Why You Should Not Be A Seventh-day Adventist (4th. ed., Minneapolis, Minn.: The Wilson Press, 1945), p. 24. Note: Mr. Jones formerly was a leader in the Adventist movement.

of the Gospel (I Cor. 9:13, 14). Yet the Adventist view does not analyze this passage exegetically, for if they did they never would be able to mix this teaching with tithing under the Law. Previously we have demonstrated that the principle of the tithe has been made a feature of two different ways of life, but it is properly correlated to each “way” so that the legal system is not intermixed with Grace principles. Thus the Adventist view of the tithe is not scriptural and it is not the same as that principle for today which has been developed in this dissertation. Therefore the Adventist principle of tithing is rejected because it is on the wrong basis entirely.

Offerings

Without distinguishing between tithes and offerings Adventism speaks of free-will offerings,¹ but again the Old and New Testament teachings are mixed together as though there is no distinction between Law and Grace. The question is asked, “By what has God ordained that His work be sustained?” and the answer is, “Tithes and offerings” (Mal. 3:8).² Thus it would seem that the propagation of the Lord’s work is carried on by tithes and offerings, but no statement is made concerning special offerings such as Paul mentions in the Corinthian epistles for the assistance of needy saints. Of course it is recognized that the lack of such a statement does not mean the Adventists would not take up special offerings

¹Bible Readings, pp. 661, 662.

²Ibid., p. 661.

if the need arose. We are simply noting that no special needs are mentioned in the questions and answers which they present on the subject of giving. Van Baalen declares that “they put most, if not all, other Christians to shame by their very large per capita financial giving. Not only are they all tithers . . . their tithes go toward the support of their own churches, and on top of that they give huge sums of money for missionary work.”¹

Conclusion

In the light of the materials which have been presented our conclusion is that the Adventist view of tithing and the view presented in this dissertation are not identical. Adventism bases its teaching on the Law, while this dissertation claims that tithing for the Christian is established upon New Testament truth which differentiates Law and Grace and places the Christian under the Grace way of life.

¹ Jan Karel Van Baalen, The Chaos of Cults (7th. ed., Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1948), p. 183.

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